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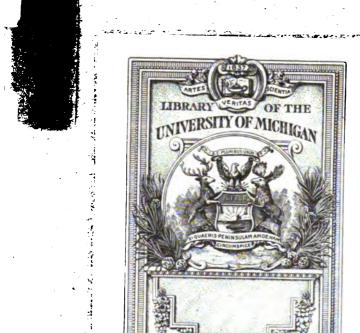
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# BELGRAVIA

A London Magazine.

Vol. LXXXIX.

JANUARY to APRIL, 1896.



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# BELGRAVIA.

JANUARY, 1896.

### 30an & Mrs. Carr,

By "RITA."

Author of "Peg the Rake," "Sheba," "Asenath of the Ford,
"The Ending of My Day," etc.

#### CHAPTER I.

MRS. CARR RECEIVES A LETTER AND LAYS PLANS.

"A LETTER from Lucius," said Mrs. Carr, taking up an envelope from a pile of letters on the breakfast table. "Now, I wonder what he wants? He never writes but on two subjects: Joan—or money. It can't be money. I sent him fifty pounds last month. Common decency wouldn't allow of his asking another loan. As for Joan—well, there's no use speculating—I'd just better see what it is."

She opened the missive; her fine eyes glanced rapidly over its contents.

"MY DEAR BETTY,—I don't know if you are still at that furnished flat you took for the season, but I chance this being forwarded. You'll be surprised to hear I'm ordered to India, a beastly hill station, too—dull as a ditch, with no society and less climate. I'm sorry now I exchanged. The question, of course, is—Joan? I can't take her, so you'll have to have her with you for a year at least. Wire if you're in town, and I'll come across and talk matters over.—In great haste, your ever affectionate brother,

" LUCIUS O'ROURKE."

"So it's Joan this time," said Mrs. Carr. She laid down the letter, and for a moment seemed lost in thought. "Take her for

a year. That means off his hands entirely. Well, I suppose I must do it, though I must say it's very short notice. . . . . Will it make any difference, I wonder? There was a time when I should have been so glad to have her, but she was young then and malleable. It's more than a year since I've seen her at all. I wonder if she's changed?"

She poured out her coffee and began to cut up her French roll with a troubled and dissatisfied look upon her handsome face. As a rule, Mrs. Carr took her troubles as lightly as she did her debts and obligations, as lightly as beseemed one of her erratic nation.

She was a strikingly handsome person with a magnificent figure, a well-set head, and wonderful, sparkling eyes.

She had a fine sense of dramatic effects, and a fluent tongue. Many who knew her declared she would have made a splendid actress, and from hearing this so often she had adopted a somewhat theatrical manner and a way of posing herself, in response to the demands of certain emotions, that were rather startling.

In private life, however, she spared herself more unnecessary exertion than that of talking aloud when there was no one present to talk to. The sound of her own voice was an inexhaustible charm to her. It was rich, mellifluous, capable of all modulations and all expressions.

At present she finished her breakfast, and then returned to the letter.

"It will be charming to have Joan," she said; "she's just my own self in my younger days. She'll take the shine out of these mealy-mouthed English girls. It's wonderful the charm of an Irish girl. Faith! I've proved that in my time—to my cost—Heaven send Joan more sense at eighteen than I had to counteract the charm!"

Her brows contracted. She rose from the table and walked over to the window of her flat, which opened on a balcony and showed all the brilliance and gaiety of Sloane Street in the morning sunlight.

"A year," she went on meditatively, "a year means a great deal in a girl's life. How much one can feel, and do, and conceal in a year!"

A sparrow alighted on the iron railings of the balcony; its

pert head and bright eye cast an unnoticed inquiry at the open window where that quiet figure stood. For once the morning crumbs were forgotten. Mrs. Carr stood there, thoughtful and absorbed, the July sun pouring its warm rays upon her dark rich hair and the downcast fringes of her eyes.

"All to myself at last," she said. "I always felt it must come some day. I wish I didn't feel so glad . . . I wish it wasn't so hard to act the part I shall have to act . . . not to her—thank Heaven for that—no one can wonder that she is fond of me, or I of her, but to others . . . sometimes the world is keener sighted than we think. Certainly it never credits us with a good motive when a bad one comes handy."

She turned back then with a sigh that challenged the imperative 'chirp of the waiting sparrow, and brought him to the window-sill in pursuit of her inattention. She looked at the little visitor and smiled.

"Did you think I had forgotten you, Dickie?" she asked, and gathered up the crumbs carefully and threw them out to the claimant. "I'll go and tell Nolan," she said suddenly. "How surprised she'll be. She'll have to do double duty now. Not that the dear old soul will care for that, as it's all in the family. That's the best of Irish servants and Irish families. Heigh-ho! we're a queer race, and a queer lot, I suppose; but if we've no great virtues ourselves, we've a grand trick of developing them in the natures of others. I couldn't quote a finer instance than Nolan. She's patience and honesty and self-sacrifice combined, and she lets her wages run on from one year's end to another—so different to those English harpies!"

She gathered up her letters, and crossed the adjoining hall toher dressing-room.

A well-dressed, elderly woman was standing there, turning over a pile of gowns.

"Oh, Nolan," said Mrs. Carr, "I've had some news. Miss Joan is coming to stay with me."

"Indeed, ma'am? I'm pleased to hear it. When will she be leaving Doblin?"

Nolan always applied a strong Irish accent to English words by way of proving her fidelity to her native country.

"Oh, I don't know yet," said Mrs. Carr indifferently. "What were you going to do with that black brocade, Nolan?"

"Well, and indade, ma'am, it's not of much use to do anything. It's too narrow in the skirt for the fashion, and the body's not the fit for the fine woman you're growing."

"Don't, Noley, dear," groaned her mistress. "We fine women have one mortal enemy—fat. And I'm afraid there's a little too much solid flesh about me now. I'm going to reduce myself on a principle. I've heard it's a certain cure, and I mean to try it."

"Faith, then, ma'am, you'll just be leaving thim sort o' cures alone, if you're wise," said Nolan, shaking out the rich folds of brocade, and looking at the material with a critical eye "'twould cut into a fine bodice—or a cape," she added, glancing at her mistress.

· "Oh! it'll do for something, no doubt," said Mrs. Carr. "I'm going to ruralise for a bit, and any old dresses will come in useful. Country folk think more of material than of fashion, and mine are all——"

" A bit showy, ma'am, for the country, aren't they?" said Nolan.

" "Showy! not a bit of it."

She laughed, and seized the brocade and examined it critically.

"Perhaps it will do for Miss Joan," she said. "She'll have none too many gowns, I expect. Noley, you see, I shall have to turn chaperon, and put myself on the shelf now."

"Faith, and I'd like to see the shelf that would be holding you, ma'am, and 'twill be many a year yet before you'll look your age, or cease throwing an eye at the men or they at you, for the matter o' that."

· Mrs. Carr shook her head gravely.

"You'll see," she said, "I'm really serious. I'm going to give up London life; it's horribly expensive, and what one gets isn't worth what one gives. I shall retire to the country, Nolan—seriously—you needn't look like that. I shall take that little house in Devonshire I heard of; it will suit me admirably."

"For how long, ma'am, axing your pardon?"

"How long?" Mrs. Carr laughed heartily. "Six months, at least, Nolan. Are you wondering whether I shall win, charm or shock country society?"

"A taste of all, if I know ye, ma'am," observed Nolan.

"I suppose there's little doubt about their boring me," went

on Mrs. Carr, "whatever I do to them. What does one do in the country, Noley? Go to church and give dinner-parties? I know they're great on church-going. It's the sign manual of respectability. To pay pew rents is the first duty of man."

"Doesn't Captain Talbot live in Devonshire?" asked Nolan, irrelevantly.

"Devonshire," said Mrs. Carr, "is rather a large county, though I've known people who believed it consisted of a lane or two and sundry farmhouses, where—not the nuts—but the clotted cream comes from: Still, as you know most of the family concerns, my good Noley, I may as well tell you that Captain Talbot has a house or some property in the very neighbourhood I have selected, and more, that he will be my sponsor to society, such as it is."

"You'll have to be making up your mind about him, then," observed Nolan. "He's a fine man and has a good heart; I'm sure o' that."

"If he has a good income is more to the point," said Mrs. Carr, "and if I don't shock his sense of propriety before he makes up his own mind. I suppose, if I flirt with the curate, or give Sunday suppers, as I do here, they would look upon me as a reprobate. The suppers would wake up even a Devonshire village, eh, Noley?"

"They would, ma'am, if the men would come."

"Do you think they are so virtuous in the country, my good Nolan? Not a bit of it. A man's virtue is like a woman's looks—skin deep at the best."

"Ah, ma'am," said Nolan, shaking her head, "will ye iver get sensible and quiet like? Sure, 'tis one surprise after another, and one flirtation on the top of another, since iver I've known ye."

"Flirtation," said Mrs. Carr, gravely, "is a misapplied term, Nolan. It only means the delicate diplomacy of the female mind by which we find out the real nature of the man who is making love to us!"

"What a dale you must know about men, ma'am," said Nolan, grimly.

Mrs. Carr laughed again.

"I do. That's why my diplomacy stops short at the stage of marrying one."

"Well, ma'am, I suppose you know your own business best.

But, indade, I often trimble for ye. 'Tis all whish, hurry-scurry, rush—up wid one, down wid another—here to-day, and there to-morrow, and no knowing what you'll be after, or how to take you, and I've known you a good twenty years now, ma'am."

. Mrs. Carr's expressive face grew suddenly grave.

"Ah!" she said, "how tragic life gets when one can remember things that happened twenty years ago. What a complexion I had then, Noley!"

"Thrue for ye, ma'am. Beautiful intirely, and indade 'tis the fine skin you have at the present moment, though the better of a trifle of powder now and thin."

"Matrimony plays havoc with one's looks, there's no doubt about it," said Mrs. Carr. "But that reminds me, I have to go out. I'll wear that black and white foulard, Noley. I think it makes me look slighter than any other gown. Look out and see if the carriage has come."

Nolan went to the window, which overlooked the street, and announced the carriage was there. Her mistress thereupon slipped out of her morning gown and put on the France foulard, and a charming bonnet, mainly composed of a few ribbon loops and de France roses.

. "I'll be home to lunch," she said. "Tell Wilson so. I forgot to give her any orders this morning, but there's plenty over from dinner last night."

Then she took up her sunshade and went down the staircase to the general entrance. Her flat was on the second floor of a set in Sloane Street. It had all the inconveniences of such desirable accommodation, and all the baits which delude people into taking them. It belonged to a fashionable lady, who after a year's personal experience had always let it in the season or out of it, at a fancy price and much profit to herself. It is scarcely necessary to say, perhaps, that she never let it twice to the same tenants. They always went in enthusiastically and departed thankfully.

Mrs. Carr had been even more enthusiastic than the general run of tenants; she was leaving at the end of four months, with the vision of a detached cottage residence in the country floating before her eyes as a paradise of rest and comfort.

But then contrast is always delightful.

She drove along in her smart little hired victoria, stopping at

several shops to give orders or pay accounts. The latter was a proceeding she hated, but previous tenants of the "bijou flat" had taught neighbouring tradespeople that bills should not be allowed to run on too long. They had calculated the delightful Irishwoman's period of tenancy with a quite surprising accuracy, and apparently an unanimous opinion as to requests for immediate settlement.

Mrs. Carr was irate, but years of experience had proved that. English tradespeople had a knack of making themselves very disagreeable, if their little accounts were not attended to. So she threw "sops to Cerberus," in the shape of small payments, lavish orders and charming personal praise of their attention, and her satisfaction with their goods. In this manner she received a further amount of credit and popularity.

She turned into the Park for half an hour before luncheon, amusing herself by criticising the ultra-smart set where women of the "Dodo" type vied with each other in talking brilliant non-sense as if it were serious sense, and kindred "souls" set Mrs. Grundy at defiance. Mrs. Carr was not in the very "smart" set herself, but she was in the next layer or strata, which is a faithful copyist of its eccentricities, from a button-hole to a hand-shake. She was rather tired herself of elevated elbows, and Titian-red hair, and at times turned them and their copyists into frank ridicule.

No one sees the joke of their own and their neighbours' absurdities more keenly than an Irish person, and at times Mrs. Carr took a positive delight in making fun of fashionable foibles to the face of fashion. She was popular enough where she was known, though as a rule men admired her more than women. She was excellent company, and could entertain without being exacting, and was a past grand mistress of the royal art of flirtation. Somehow she never compromised herself unnecessarily as her great friend and ally, Lady Kate, did. Lady Kate was a pretty, little married woman, with great ambitions and limited means. She was the youngest of seven daughters of a noble and impecunious family, and they had married her in her first season to a rich commoner whom she heartily despised, and to whom her conduct was a perpetual affront.

She had never cared for any man as a lover or any woman as a friend with the exception of Betty Carr. She admired her en-

thusiastically; all the more because she was not easily shocked. Lady Kate, as a rule, passed her life in inventing ways of shocking people.

Their victorias passed each other in the Row, a few minutes after Mrs. Carr had entered it. By a preconcerted signal they drew up at one special place and both got out, meeting shortly afterwards and proceeding to the chairs, where most people and least shade seemed to have decided it was the fashion to be seen. Mrs. Carr rushed into rapid confidence with her friend on the subject of Joan. Lady Kate seemed to think that for a woman to get enthusiastic about a girl was little short of idiotic. If it were a man, now—but a girl—and young, and a niece—gracious!—it was almost as bad to be an aunt as a grandmother.

" And what have you done with the Counsellor?" she asked. Mrs. Carr laughed.

"Oh, he has left town—Cowes, or somewhere, I believe. You see you were quite wrong. I always said he was not a marrying man."

"Well, you could have married him if you chose," said Lady Kate. "He raved about you. As a rule, I dislike a man who raves about one special woman, unless it's myself."

"Ca va sans dire," observed her friend.

"Yes, I have a good opinion of myself, I know. Why shouldn't I? I needn't play the hypocrite to you, Betty; need I? But, really, your captain was quite ridiculous! It was Mrs. Carr this—Mrs. Carr that. How Mrs. Carr played tennis, how Mrs. Carr dressed—(Well, certainly, there you are not easy to beat. How you carry your thirteen stone so gracefully, I can't imagine!)—what Mrs. Carr wore, or didn't wear—no, that's myself I'm thinking of. He used to be so rude to me—and after all, do you mean to say he's gone away, and not said anything?"

"Oh! he said a great deal, but not what you expected, and a very good thing, too. I wouldn't marry him. He's too good, for one thing, and——"

Lady Kate laughed.

"Oh, my dear! fancy any man being too good for a woman, and a naval man, too! Well, that's rich! Captain Talbot seems pretty straight, I grant—at least one's never heard anything; but then the worst vices are the concealed ones. Given a racehorse or a ballet-girl, one knows a man's limits; but those

against whom discretion places a mark are generally depraved sinners, to whom Epicurean vice appeals and an ordinary faux pas doesn't. I expect your Captain Talbot——"

"Now, now, Kate, I won't allow it; not behind his back."

"Well, it can be before his face, if you prefer; for here he is, coming along."

#### CHAPTER II.

#### A FRIEND AND A SUITOR.

CAPTAIN TALBOT, late H.M. Royal Navy, was a well-preserved and somewhat distinguished-looking man of forty-two. He was well off, and much given to yachting. He had never married—having been too poor as a young man, and too fastidious as a middle-aged one, to attach himself to any special member of a sex he had always found embarrassing.

He had a charming house on the Dart, and chambers in town, but spent most of his time on board his yacht, the *Phanix*. He had made the acquaintance of Mrs. Carr in the early part of this present season, having met her at a dinner party given by a certain admiral of the fleet in honour of an illustrious foreign visitor. He had been appointed to take Mrs. Carr in to dinner, and her conversation had added a piquancy to the sauces and a flavour to the wines, for which he felt duly grateful, during twelve long courses on a hot May evening. Since, then, the acquaintance had ripened into friendliness, and induced him to waste a considerable portion of his time in dancing attendance on the fascinating Irishwoman, instead of on his yacht.

Lady Kate had been quite right in describing his enthusiasm. Anyone who had the pleasure of Captain Talbot's acquaintance heard a good deal of Mrs. Carr and Mrs. Carr's perfections.

He joined the two women in the Row as a climax to Lady Kate's animadversions. His fine face lit up with unconcealed pleasure as he saw Mrs. Carr, and he dropped into a vacant chair beside her with a quite suspicious alacrity.

"We were discussing the errors of your sex," she said laughing. "Lady Kate wasn't sparing you, I assure you. She thinks you're all bad under the surface, and that virtue consists in superior artfulness."

His keen blue eyes flashed across at the pretty little woman

whom he cordially disliked, and yet was obliged to tolerate for sake of Mrs. Carr.

"I am sorry her experience has been so unfortunate," he said.

"Oh, I was speaking generally. Experience had nothing to do with it," said Lady Kate. "A perfectly good man is an utter impossibility in real life. Of course he appears in books, an epitome of all the virtues in three volumes, to please the critics, I suppose. I'm sure even the young person of sixteen doesn't believe in him nowadays."

"What do you mean by goodness?" asked Captain Talbot, dryly.

"All the cardinal virtues, of course. It's not only a matter of keeping all the commandments, which I'm sure no man and very few women have ever done yet, but a flawless life lived from blameless motives. Go from the highest to the lowest in the land and find me such a man!"

"You certainly wouldn't find him among the highest," answered the captain; "though goodness doesn't especially attach to any particular class or profession; but with all due deference to you, Lady Kate, I think human nature is very much as it has always been—a little evil leavened with much good, or a little good leavened with much evil. Of course in the purely artificial life of society there is a preponderance of the latter."

"You should hear Tommy Attwood on the corruptions of society," interposed Mrs. Carr. "Do you know Tommy, Captain Talbot? He's on the staff of the Scalpel, and he's been writing a series of articles on Fashionable Sins and Fashionable Sinners. They're wonderfully smart, and awfully wicked. He says society is corrupt to the core. That the women are as bad as the men, and that modern religion is only the worship of the Golden Calf, spiced with sensational services."

"He is quite right," said Lady Kate. "We do worship money—there's no doubt about it. Rank, position, worth, are nothing nowadays without moneybags. If a person is ever so ill-bred or objectionable, money will buy his passport into the best circles. Even if wealth has been acquired not too honestly, society will shut its eyes to the means, and only look at the results. Be a millionaire, however shoddy or shady, and duchesses will fight for the privilege of introducing you, and the

cream of the cream will rush to your entertainments; you can marry whom you please, short of royalty, and that only is exclusive by Act of Parliament."

"That is a terrible picture," said Captain Talbot. "How does this Tommy—something, know it is a true one? He, I suppose, is scarcely in a position to associate with the 'cream' either by right of wealth or distinction."

"Oh, he is only a journalist," said Mrs. Carr, "but they have great opportunities nowadays of getting into a good set. You see there is a modern craze for advertising, and that of course has created the fashionable journal. It is not enough for society to give an entertainment now, but the said entertainment must be puffed, noticed and described in all the eloquence of print. Lady A—— sees what is said of Lady B——, and then she endeavours to outshine her party, or outrival her novelty. Lady C—— takes toil of both, and improves on their ideas. The Countess of Grafton told me one day that she had been obliged to patent her candle shades for fear of their being copied. But then she is really very exclusive."

"And how does your friend the journalist get to these exclusive entertainments?"

"Who—Tommy? Oh, he is of very good family—youngest son of Lord Avarace. They were furious with him, but he was over head and ears in debt, and the editor offered him ever so much because he could give real society tips. Why, even members of the Royal Household do that now. I often wonder if the Queen knows? I'm sure she can't approve of the contents of her wardrobe, and what she wears, eats, drinks and does, being published in penny papers for the benefit of snobs and tradespeople."

"Oh, it's all wrong and absurd and ridiculous," exclaimed Lady Kate. "But it's life—and one must do something!"

"That's our best excuse," said Mrs. Carr, "or our worst. You have your yacht, Captain Talbot, Lady Kate has her admirers, and I—I am going to have Joan."

"Joan?" echoed the captain, "and who is she?"

"She is a girl," said Mrs. Carr. "A girl young, beautiful and—Irish. Do you like the picture?"

"It sounds charming, but has it no other name than 'Joan'?"

A sudden little flush seemed to warm Mrs. Carr's creamy skin.

"She is my niece," she said. "My brother is ordered out to India, and she is left in my charge for a year."

"And it will be 'Joan & Mrs. Carr,' now," said Lady Kate, with a little malicious laugh. "I can't fancy you as a chaperon, my dear, and I'm sure you haven't a little hoard of maxims 'ready to preach down' a niece's heart, have you?"

"Joan will not require it," said Mrs. Carr, coldly.

"Oh, don't tell me she is a young person with 'views!'" exclaimed Lady Kate. "All the modern young women have gone in for 'views' and 'opinions,' the fault of that dreadful prig 'Evadne,' I'm sure. She's done a lot of harm in her generation."

Captain Talbot looked bewildered. He never read novels, and to him the prurient or precocious or introspective type of women, beloved of modern writers, was an unknown quantity. He had old-fashioned views, and old-fashioned prejudices. The one was being perpetually disillusioned, and the other perpetually shocked by modern society. Still he held them shrined in his heart of hearts, and believed in their ultimate realisation.

"Joan is not at all like Evadne, or—or any of those impossible, lecturing, preaching young women one hears of nowadays," said Mrs. Carr, "but I won't say too much about her, or you'll be disappointed. I don't like being told beforehand what a person is. I never find the reality in the least like the portrait. By the way, Captain Talbot, I have written about that house you told me of. The agent gives a charming description of it. Small, but then we shall only be two, and I am not going to entertain lavishly, or have a house party, unless Lady Kate takes pity on me."

"Anything in my power—" murmured the captain. "My yacht will be quite at your service, and I know so many of the country people. Coombe Ditton is my native place, you know."

"I—yes—I remember you told me so," said Mrs. Carr, ignoring a sharp glance from Lady Kate's quick eyes. "It is very pretty and picturesque, and all that, isn't it?"

"I am perhaps prejudiced," he said with a smile. "I have always thought there is no lovelier spot in England."

"And do you know the house? St. Petrox, isn't it?"

"I know it-slightly. It was originally a cottage, but it has

been enlarged and altered amazingly. The grounds are charming, and the view magnificent—if you care for views."

"Joan does," said Mrs. Carr, rising from her chair. "It must be nearly luncheon time, Kate," she said. "Will you come back with me?"

"Sorry I'm engaged," answered Lady Kate. "But I'll look in at four if you'll give me some tea, and we can drive over to that 'At Home' at Richmond afterwards. It's an ideal day for a garden party, and I've got an ideal frock."

"And I'm not asked," sighed Captain Talbot regretfully.

"Oh, you know you hate 'At Homes,'" said Mrs. Carr laughingly, "and they'd be sure to want you to play tennis."

His eyes looked expressive, but he said nothing. Then they moved off in the direction of their waiting victorias.

As she drove back, Mrs. Carr began to consider the subject of her increasing intimacy with Captain Talbot. He was constantly by her side whenever they met, and that was almost a daily occurrence.

Lady Kate had nicknamed him the Counsellor because he was always ready with advice, assistance, escort—anything, in fact, that an unattached woman requires from an unattached man. She assured her friend that the flirtation was getting serious, and Mrs. Carr found herself wondering whether it was so. She did not want to marry him, or, indeed—anyone. But he was the least objectionable of her many admirers, and he would make an admirable husband.

"I wonder if he is well off? He is irreproachable as far as family goes," she thought, as she drove through the sunny streets where the spray of a water-cart, the shade of a parasol, seemed the only elements of coolness. "I wish I knew if he were rich. A man would have found that out so easily. Perhaps I can make some discoveries when I am on the spot. His house is only a few miles from St. Petrox. I'll set Nolan to work. She's a splendid 'tracker,' and seems to be telling you everything while worming out your own secrets. Dear, dear, what shall I do with myself in the country at all? Harvest fields, and cows and early rising, aren't a bit in my line. If only I wasn't so terribly short of money I'd have gone to Switzerland, but the hotels are simply ruinous. What with Americans and Cook's tours, they've not an idea of treating a foreigner to anything but

'charges' and: 'bif-stek.' I don't know what possessed me to take this house, now I come to think of it, except that it sounded cheap. 'I wonder if Joan will like it? Ah! sure, too, she's always raving about the country. I hope Lucius will be here by Thursday. What a queer knockabout life we've had, the two of us, and not in calm water yet, and how we've enjoyed it! Faith, I'd rather have a little storm and turmoil any day than know I was becalmed and laid by in harbous. 'Tis a mixture of metaphors, but no matter. Ah, here we are. I declare I'll enjoy a bit of mayonnaise and a glass or two of champagne amazingly!"

#### CHAPTER III.

#### ". . . AND PLAY THE PARTS OF HAPPY ROVERS."

LUCIUS O'ROURKE was a fair specimen of the "rollicking Irishman." He was almost as handsome as his sister, and quite as good company.

He loved cards and horses. He was excessively goodnatured, and excessively generous. He was always in debt, and never seemed any the worse for it. He would borrow from one person to pay another, and end by owing both. He had a picturesque way of stating simple facts, and a vividness of detail that made a lie infinitely more pleasing than a plain truth. He was a favourite with men and women alike; a favourite everywhere, except perhaps in one or two towns where his debts were too numerous to be paid, at any solicitation, and his escapades, make-shifts and adventures more exciting than creditable.

In exchanging into a regiment for foreign service he had been actuated solely by reasons of prudence and the persuasions of necessity. He had not deemed it necessary to give undue advertisement to the fact of this exchange, as he did not desire to trouble the souls of his creditors, or offer them any inducement to expend stamps, paper and persuasions in bringing little accounts to his notice.

Lucius O'Rourke was, in fact, one of those delightful men whose imprudence and extravagance are flung off as burdens on the hearts of their family, and never allowed to weigh on their own consciences, or interfere with their own desires. His marriage was somewhat of a mystery, and had been announced only when he appeared as a widower, with a little child of a year old, as proof of his loss and explanation of a mourning garb. The child had been constantly with him, living his knockabout life, and sharing his good and evil fortunes. It surprised people that his sister, Mrs. Carr, who was devoted to him, did not offer to adopt the child, especially as year after year passed on and she had no family of her own. But Mrs. Carr, being as erratic and extravagant as most of the O'Rourkes, was not likely to have made a better guardian for Joan than her father.

She was now eighteen, a beautiful girl, with the emotional and poetic temperament of her race, and an amount of patience and common sense that were the result of her experiences. She loved her father with a pitying comprehension of his shortcomings, but she adored her aunt.

The visits to her in Dublin, the holidays spent with her at Bray or Killarney, stood out in her mind as delightful experiences. Mrs. Carr had always seemed to her the cleverest, wittiest and most delightful of companions; a Cleopatra, whose moods of "infinite variety" never grew stale, and whose charms never grew less.

The idea of living with her entirely for a year lessened any regrets at her father's sudden departure. There would be no more debts and schemes, no shams and make-shifts, such as her young years had known and hated ever since she could remember.

She had always looked upon Mrs. Carr as a wealthy and successful woman, with an assured position in society, of which she was a popular member. But it was not of society she thought, or the advantages of London life, or, indeed, anything but the simple delight of being with Mrs. Carr herself.

Her father's arrangements were all so hurried that it seemed to Joan as if she were in London and driving to her aunt's flat in Sloane Street almost as soon as she had heard they were going there. But the warm welcome they received showed that neither fashion nor society had altered Mrs. Carr's feelings, and in spite of limited accommodation, she insisted on their putting up at the flat, though Lucius suggested an hotel.

After dinner the girl left them to each other's company while she went to unpack her father's portmanteau and arrange his things, the Major having a rooted objection to do anything for himself that anyone else could possibly do for him.

Mrs. Carr opened fire while her brother sipped black coffee and lit a cigarette.

"And so you've made up you mind to go to India?" she said.

"Didn't I tell you so? I've thought of it often and talked of it oftener. I don't like the idea at all, but I couldn't live in Ireland on this beggarly pay any longer."

"I couldn't imagine your living on any pay or any income, Lucius," observed his sister. "You've been in debt all your life, and I suppose it's too late to mend your ways now. But with regard to Joan——"

"Yes," said Lucius O'Rourke, looking up at her and smiling rather oddly. "Perhaps you would prefer her going out to India?"

"Indeed, no. I'm delighted it has all happened so naturally. To whom could she go except to me?"

"I can have her out in a year or two," went on the Major; "when I have had time to look about me, and can tell what chances there are for a girl. She's deucedly handsome, Betty, and we ought to get her well married."

"I'd rather see her happy," said Mrs. Carr.

"Well, why shouldn't she be both?" . . !

"I don't know—only, a 'good match' rarely means a happy one."

"Faith, they're as happy as men choose to make them," said the Major. "It's no use expecting too much. That's where women make the mistake. Did you hear of Charley Kelley, by-the bye? After all, his marriage turned out trumps."

"What! Charley Kelley, who married that awful, old Mrs. M'Ennery, and was so ashamed of it that they got up before eight in the morning so that no one should know, and went-separate ways to the church."

"The same. And you've heard what a life he had, poor boy? She allowed him a half-a-crown a week for pocket-money, and was for ever threatening to leave her money to a hospital. Well, she died last week, and he's got every penny."

"Virtue rewarded, indeed!" said Mrs. Carr. "But I suppose he deserved it. Everyone said he was very good to her, and

faithful too, which is more than can be said for many men with better wives."

"Well, marriage is a lottery and no mistake," said the Major; "and I've always told Joan not to have foolish and romantic notions about men. We're none of us worth it, 'pon my word."

"I'm quite sure of that," said Mrs. Carr, dryly. "Love and marriage are two totally dissimilar things. If they could be arranged on the same lines," she added thoughtfully, "there might be a chance of happiness. But the familiarity and coarseness of the one kills the romance and attraction of the other. No really beautiful love story has ever had a happy ending. Poets and novelists were too wise to permit it. The tomb and the poison cup were far more suitable to Juliet than if she had become Mrs. Montague and died a grandmother, after seeing Romeo grow bald and stout, and have half-a-dozen other affaires, and swear at the lark for waking him too early, instead of making pretty speeches about its song on a balcony."

The Major laughed.

"How horribly unromantic, and yet, once---"

The colour flamed to her cheek.

"Once," she interrupted hurriedly, "I was too romantic, you mean. Well, I've made up for it since, Lucius. Prose, prose! the hardest and baldest. That is what life has meant for me. I was never likely again to fall in love with an ideal of truth—constancy and nobility, and call it—man!"

"Ah," said her brother, throwing away his cigarette and lighting a fresh one, "that's what girls will do; it's so foolish. We're not heroes and you're not goddesses. We begin matrimony by expecting too much, and end it by being content with too little."

"You mean for sake of peace and quietness?"

"Exactly. If you're wise, don't let Joan grow romantic. Talk the commonest of common sense to her, and tell her that marriage is only an experience."

"From which a woman must eliminate any other woman's experience, and be satisfied with her own," said Mrs. Carr, moodily.

"Exactly; but preparation is a help. I've done the best I can. I leave her in your hands with an easy conscience."

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"And what about the money, Lucius?" asked his sister after a moment's silence.

"Oh, that will be all right," he said briskly. He drew a small note-book out of his pocket and referred to it. "I owe you two hundred pounds altogether," he said. "I can safely promise you one before I leave. I am going to sell my hunters."

"Are you really!" exclaimed Mrs. Carr. "Well, that's sensible."

"And they're sure to fetch a good price," he went on with the buoyant hopefulness of his nation. "Enough to clear me entirely, I daresay—Irish hunters are always so much thought of."

"You don't owe very much, I hope," said his sister. "Joan always worries so over unpaid debts."

"Yes; in that respect she belies her national character," laughed Lucius O'Rourke. He glanced round the room and lit another cigar. "You're in very snug quarters here," he remarked. "How did you manage it?"

Mrs. Carr laughed.

"Oh, it was quite a chance," she said; "I got the flat on the strength of my excellent connections and my position in society. You have no idea how titles help one! I had the option of subletting also, which I've done at a higher rental."

"But the season's nearly over?"

"I know; but these people are Americans—first visit to England—and they don't seem to know the season is comparatively over; and I didn't think it necessary to tell them. In any case, they're so rich that it's quite a charity to relieve them of some of their everlasting dollars."

"And when do you leave London?" asked her brother.

"In another fortnight. I've taken a charming little cottage in Devonshire for six months. It's in a place where there are a good many naval men, and excellent county society. I've several introductions."

He looked surprised.

"It's rather a strange whim, isn't it? You don't generally care for rural life and rural scenes."

"No; the evenings are so hatefully long, and the society so narrow-minded. Of course it's different in Ireland."

He laughed.

"I should think so. They're rather more lively even in the country there. You won't be sitting up till five in the morning playing nap, I'll be bound. Nor getting up a pic-nic or dance the moment half-a-dozen people get together. Ah, my dear, we've had some rare fooling in the 'ould country' after all."

He sighed, and then laughed.

"You'll be missed," said Mrs. Carr, significantly.

"Yes, and like Sir Peter Teazle, I'm leaving my character behind me," he said.

"As well as your debts?"

"Ah, well, the one settles the other. You should never expect too much from an Irishman."

His sister laughed.

"No one who knows you would expect anything from you, Lucius, but pretty speeches and fair promises. How you manage to escape as you do is a mystery."

'They know I've a chance of a fortune falling to me some day," he said, "and the Irish are essentially a hopeful nation."

"It's a very poor chance," said Mrs. Carr; "of course, you mean Uncle Devenish?"

"Who else? The old curmudgeon can't live for ever, and I've as good a right to his money as any other of his nephews."

"What about—nieces?" said Mrs. Carr, significantly.

"Oh, I wouldn't begrudge you the chance, Betty. We've always stood by one another."

"I meant the other side of the house—his wife's family."

"They're just like horse leeches round the place, and it's as much as one can do to get sight or sound of the old man now," said the Major."

"Well, I wish he would leave you his money. It would be a grand thing for you," said Mrs. Carr. "But he's such a pugnacious old——"

"Exactly," said her brother. "It runs in the family. The O'Rourkes were always good for a row—first in and last out. You used to have a very fair temper of your own once, Betty."

"I know and I believe it's lurking about somewhere still; but as you say, it runs in the family. At least, on our side Joan doesn't seem to have inherited it."

"No—God bless her! She is as sweet as cream—and as good. And talking of angels——"

"Who was talking of them?" asked Joan's clear, pretty voice, as she entered the room. "They're not a frequent subject of conversation with you, father."

"Indeed, you're right, my darling," he answered, laughing, "they bear out their own proverb. Betty, what are we going to do this evening? Are you inclined for a bit of diversion at all? What's on at the theatres?"

"It's rather late for them," said Mrs. Carr. "But there's the Palace and the Alhambra. They're not 'tabooed' any longer, even to girls."

"Oh, but I hate ballets and comic songs," exclaimed Joan.

"Ah, but you've never seen an Empire ballet," said Mrs. Carr. The girl shook her head.

"No, and I don't care to," she said.

"Perhaps you're tired," said Mrs. Carr. "And, indeed, Lucius, it's very hot, and perhaps we'll be more comfortable at home. I mean Joan and myself, of course. No doubt, you want to be off somewhere. But we women will have a quiet chat here, and go to bed early, for sake of our complexions. I want to show Joan in the Park to-morrow."

Major O'Rourke rose with alacrity. He was not sorry to be off "on his own account." London always possessed attractions for him—as it does for any man untrammelled by domestic obligations—and not too scrupulous. He changed his coat, and borrowed his sister's latch-key, and then took his handsome person and inquiring mind off to the regions of Piccadilly and the Strand.

London is ugly, and noisy, and detestable. It is overcrowded and vulgar; it teems with awful contrasts of wasteful luxury and ghastly need, and yet it holds a powerful and resistless attraction for those who know it, and for those who don't.

Major O'Rourke allowed himself to be elbowed and hustled about on the narrow pavements, shouted at by newspaper boys, and deafened by 'bus conductors; he watched the confused mass of vehicles—carriage liveries, omnibus roofs, carts, cabs, and laden waggons going to the great markets—and only said—"Ah, this is life again!"

The hot July night had no calmness and no beauty in those gas-lit, dusty, crowded streets. Even the faces of the pleasure-seekers looked pallid and jaded, and the flower-girls, and the

beggars, and the ragged children, seemed too weary and dispirited to try and claim attention.

The season was waning. Town would soon be empty with that limited emptiness that is supposed to be desolation to the Metropolis. The heat, and the Earl's Court Exhibition had already induced one or two of the best theatres to close their doors, and relegated others to the artistic mercies of "scratch companies" or adventurous Americans. But Major O'Rourke found one to his liking, and having laughed himself hoarse over the suggestiveness of a wildly impossible farce, and witnessed the closing performance at the Pavilion as a wind up, he turned into St. James's Restaurant for oysters and chablis, in a very excellent humour with himself, and with an entire forgetfulness of such trifling disagreeables as debts and foreign service, and—Joan!

#### CHAPTER IV.

#### CONTEMPLATING AN EXPERIMENT.

MRS. CARR dropped into a comfortable lounging chair beside the open window, and signed to Joan to take another.

"Now for a long chat," she said. "It's ages since we've had one."

Then she looked critically at the girl; at her lovely red-brown hair, her dark-lashed eyes, her beautiful, creamy skin, her fault-less grace of form.

"Heliotrope's the fashionable colour this season," she observed.
"It ought to suit you admirably."

Joan laughed.

"And is that what you were thinking of so gravely?" she asked. "I imagined it was something much more important."

"Dress is a very important subject," said Mrs. Carr, "especially to a young woman. I hope you've not left your heart in Dublin, by the way?"

The girl shook her head.

"No, Aunt Betty. You know my opinion of men, and Irishmen in particular. They're rather a failure as husbands, however admirable as lovers."

Mrs. Carr sighed. She could have endorsed that opinion from a very painful experience.

"You're a sensible girl, Joan," she said presently, "and as such I'm going to talk to you. I hold it's better for a girl to marry than not to marry for many reasons. But if she's wise she won't let feeling run away with common sense. Men are very disappointing. It's a waste of time and feeling to idealise them into anything that doesn't appreciate a good dinner before anything on earth—or expect a wife to take all the worries and exactions of a household off their shoulders. To my thinking, the two desirable points in a husband are, a good income and a good temper. You have a fair prospect of happiness with these. You've none at all without. Before you've been married a year you begin to consider that peace may be the one supreme good of life. In half-a-dozen you've realised that it is, and would make any sacrifice to gain it."

Joan looked out thoughtfully at the flower-filled balcony high up above the noise of the street, and sending forth sweet fragrance of roses and mignonette and verbena under the primrose-hued sky.

"I wish," she said, "that the horizon of a woman's life wasn't bounded by marriage. Surely we ought to have liberty of thought and action—scope for work if we feel inclined to do it. Why must the be-all and end-all of our future seem only centred in exchange of name, and loss of freedom?"

"Oh, my dear, don't become a 'New Woman,' whatever you' do," exclaimed Mrs. Carr. "Independence of thought and action are very dangerous, and lead one goodness knows where! I never thought you were strong-minded."

"I hope you never thought I was weak," said the girl.

Her eyes looked sad, and her mouth had a curious, wistful droop about its soft corners. Life had been too stormy and troubled a thing for Joan not to have learnt its prosaic side and its manifold necessities.

She had been forced to think of others—to be firm and self-reliant and independent—and she had few illusions left. The soft follies and simple foibles of girlhood seemed to her far away and childish beside the experiences of her own life. To live with Lucius O'Rourke was a liberal education, and his code of morals was enough to blunt the fine edges of any moral nature—masculine or feminine. Those calm, deep eyes of Joan's had read him long ago—and pitied him—even while their half-veiled scorn stung him in some moments of revelation.

But he was fond of the girl and proud of her. The lesser nature recognised the higher, and allowed its excellence even while feeling its rebuke.

No, Joan was certainly not weak, and Mrs. Carr acknowledged it as she met the grave inquiry of those beautiful, deep eyes.

"I know what you mean," she said, absently twisting the, rings on those white, firm, exquisitely-shaped hands that were one of her "strong points." "You have had to think and act for others so much that it has made you almost too self-reliant for your age. Still, as long as you don't wear divided, skirts, or ride bicycles, I have hopes of you."

"I should certainly ride a bicycle if I admired the process, or thought any benefit was to be derived from the exercise," said Joan. "But in my opinion the women look such sights, and the attitude is so ungraceful that I have never felt the slightest inclination to rick my back or get round-shouldered by following, a temporary craze of fashion."

"I believe it reduces one's weight," said Mrs. Carr, clasping her hands round a waist somewhat ampler than her dressmaker: approved. "Lady Waring has gone in for it. She weighs over fifteen stone, and is sixty if a day. She broke two machines in learning, and I hear she's quite slim now."

"This ought to be called the generation of Perpetual Youth," said Joan. "No woman seems to be old even if she's a grand-mother. What with dyed hair and dyed complexions and tight-lacing they make me feel humiliated for my sex."

"That's a favourite expression of yours, Joan," laughed Mrs. Carr. "You feel that way often, don't you?"

"Unfortunately, yes," said the girl. "I suppose I have an old-fashioned weakness for a womanly woman. Now you, Aunt Bet, with all your vagaries, are very feminine."

Again Mrs. Carr laughed.

"Thanks for your candour, dear. I hope I am. I went to a Primrose League meeting a short time back, and when I saw the president in a cut-away coat and pot hat, and a dozen or so of her supporters on the platform illustrating the ugliness of a rational costume, and talking irrational nonsense at the top of their voices, I felt that the Ordinary Woman had much to be thankful for. By the way, have you ever been to a women's debating club?"

"No; I should like to go immensely."

"Well, I can take you. I don't belong to it, but I can get an invitation whenever I wish. They have a club, and rooms for debates, reading, eating, sleeping, and general independence. Country members come up without their husbands, and girls without their mothers. It's all delightfully free and untrammelled, and the debates are of so candid a nature that men are prohibited from listening to them."

"Oh, you must take me," said Joan eagerly. "What a topsyturvy sort of age this seems, doesn't it? Men and women seem bent on exchanging their respective spheres of life. The men are turning effete and feminine; the women dominant and masculine."

"It comes of long years of suppression, and the good example of our dear American cousins," said Mrs. Carr. "But as you and I, my dear Joan, are unfitted by nature, habit, or inclination to join the Strong-Minded League, let us change the subject. Give me some Dublin news by way of variety."

"Which means scandal," laughed Joan. "How dearly we Irish love it!"

"Well, it keeps us out of worse mischief, maybe," said Mrs. Carr, settling herself down more comfortably among her cushions. "Now, tell me who's married—or dead—or divorced—since I was last in the dear, distressful country."

Joan obeyed. She knew her aunt's weakness, and though averse to gossip herself, had managed to collect a good deal of information under the head of "news."

When Mrs. Carr had listened, exclaimed and been edified by the various schemes and scrapes of her countrywomen, had laughed over "make-shifts" and adventures, and enjoyed the vagaries which, in any other race would have become scandalous, she sent Joan over to the piano to sing to her.

The girl had a rich and well-trained contralto voice, and it was always a treat to hear her. She sang song after song from memory, while the shadows gathered about the pretty, lamp-lit room, and outside the glittering stars shone in the dark blue of the sky, and the stir and bustle of the streets lessened as if the world was growing tired at last.

Mrs. Carr sat on— her eyes on the brilliant heavens—her heart stirred and softened to faint trouble by the pathetic sweetness and tender passion of the music and the words.

- Who can sing Irish music like an Irishwoman, or man?—that intense pathos, that half heart-broken appeal, that wail of sadness and regret so characteristic of their national melodies seem to find comprehension and interpretation only in a national interpreter.

Joan O'Rourke sang with all her heart in her notes. Often as her aunt had heard her, well as she knew the power and sweetness and strange haunting timbre of that beautiful voice, she could never listen to it without an ache of heart, a sudden moisture of eye, a memory of all that had been sweetest and best in her life, a passionate regret for dead dreams, dead hopes, dead loves.

The music ceased. The girl rose and closed the piano.

"I am tired now," she said. "Do you mind if I go to my room?"

Mrs. Carr rose too. Her eyes, still wet with tears, looked tenderly at the pale, grave young face.

"Joan," she said, "I'm afraid you're not happy. I wish you were, my dear—oh, I wish you were! Youth is so short, it seems hard it should bring trials and anxieties with it."

The girl kissed her softly.

"Don't worry about me, dear," she said. "I am happy enough, and I shall be more so with you. A whole year together. How we shall enjoy it!"

But that little, anxious frown still puckered Mrs. Carr's smooth brow.

"You are sure—" she repeated, as she held the girl's slender hands in her own; "you are sure, Joan, that there's not one behind for whom you care; that you haven't a little bit of a heartache?"

"Not the least in the world," said the girl, brightly, "dear aunt Bet. I've never committed the folly of 'falling in love,' though you're always accusing me of it. I don't care for men. They don't interest me, and I've seen so many unhappy marriages that I have lost all inclination for an experiment on my own account."

"Ah," said Mrs. Carr, as she released her hands; "that speech sounds heart-whole at all events."

They went to their respective rooms then, and Mrs. Carr rang for Nolan, who was all eagerness and anxiety to hear news of Dublin folk, and enjoy tit-bits of Dublin scandal.

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Your old family Irish servant has her privileges as well as her drawbacks—but as a rule her master and mistress are lenient on the point of "fellow-feeling."

Mrs. Carr served up a rechauffe of the gossip that had already delighted her heart, for Nolan's benefit, what time her still luxuriant hair was being brushed, and her night toilet arranged. Then she went to bed and wondered if she would be able to get Joan well married before the end of the year, and dozed off to sleep while calculating the relative advantages of prospective suitors.

### CHAPTER V.

"DAYS ALL PASS'D IN JEOPARDY AND JEST."

MAJOR O'ROURKE was for once true to his word. The sale of his horses more than realised his expectations, and he handed his sister a cheque for a hundred pounds before he returned to Dublin to make his final preparations.

The season was so nearly over that Mrs. Carr considered any outlay in the way of gowns for Joan unnecessary. She had one or two sufficiently stylish for the Park and the small dances that were still on Mrs. Carr's engagement list.

The day after her arrival, Captain Talbot called, and was shown into the pretty, shaded drawing-room where the two women were discussing afternoon tea and country and yachting toilets.

Mrs. Carr greeted him with her usual cordiality.

"And this is Joan," she said, "the niece I told you about. I'm sorry my brother's not in, Captain Talbot. He's only in town for a few days, and he has a great deal to do, as you may imagine."

Captain Talbot looked at the tall, stately young person who bowed to him so graciously. She impressed him as being totally unlike the general run of society young ladies, and the frankness and savoir faire of her manner reminded him of that irresistible attraction he had found in Mrs. Carr. As for Joan: herself, she-liked the frank, honest face, the clear blue eyes, and general air of kindliness and good humour about her aunt's friend. His manners seemed to her a little stiff at first, and his way of speaking somewhat measured and constrained after

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the free-and-easy ways of her own countrymen. But she allowed! a wide margin for difference of character and national peculiarities.

As she handed him a cup of tea, Lady Kate bustled in. She had not seen Mrs. Carr for two days, and was full of wonder at so extraordinary an occurrence.

Her keen eyes took stock of the "good points" of the Irishgirl, even while she was shaking hands and professing herself delighted at a meeting for which she had been quite prepared and quite curious. She felt she did not like Joan. She was convinced of that when the girl's astonished eyes rebuked her slang and vulgarity, as she rattled off the inconsequent, frivolous chatter of society, and expressed opinions on somewhat delicate matters with the usual freedom and plainness of speech accorded to women who are privileged to be fast. Joan did not like it, though she was not an atom prudish or narrow-minded; but a certain feminine delicacy revolted against such topics being introduced into ordinary conversation, especially before a man.

She was quite relieved when Lady Kate took her scented laces and frivolous chatter off to one of her numberless engagements, and she was free to listen to Captain Talbot's quiet, well-chosen speech and interesting description of places he had visited and scenes he had known.

He was delighted to find she had the same simple tastes, the same love for the country as himself; and Mrs. Carr beamed approvingly on the friendly understanding between the two, and thought her naval friend had never shown himself to better advantage.

"This is my farewell visit, Mrs. Carr," he said, as he rose to take leave. "I am going down to Cowes, really, at last, and then round the coast as I told you. I hope to find you settled comfortably in your country quarters when I next have the pleasure of seeing you."

"And mind, captain, I depend on you for introductions and society," exclaimed Mrs. Carr. "I'm not a bit of a Selkirk, you know. I love my fallow men and women, even if they're not agreeable. We Irish are essentially a social race, and we like to talk, even more than to be entertained."

He looked at her handsome face and sparkling eyes, and thought how delightfully outspoken she was, and what a sensa-

tion she would make in county society—the society of that quaint, pretty town that had been his birthplace, and where his family had been known and revered for generations past.

It did not occur to him that the said county circle considered itself very exclusive, and that they might not be inclined to receive Mrs. Carr with open arms, even at his recommendation. Men are apt to be short-sighted in the matter of their affections, and oftener create a prejudice than an impression by reason of injudicious championship.

"He is delightful," exclaimed Joan, as the door closed on their visitor. "And fancy having a yacht at our disposal, Aunt Bet!"

"I hope I sha'n't be sea-sick," said Mrs. Carr doubtfully.

"Oh, we'll only go out when it's smooth," said Joan, laughing. "You'll get me a couple of nice frocks, won't you, dear?" she added. "I do like a suitable dress for boating. I must learn to row, you know."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Carr, "I foresee plenty of amusement for you. I wonder if it's going to be a case of 'the lass who loved' a sailor?'"

Joan laughed.

"How you do harp on that string. It'll be a case of the lass who never loved anyone better than dear Aunt Bet."

Mrs. Carr shook her head.

"Ah, my dear, we all say that sort of thing before we meet our fate. It can't be 'Joan & Mrs. Carr' always, you know."

"It's a very pretty friendship, as it stands," parodied Joan. "I don't know that I'm asking anything better of life or fate."

"Indeed, I believe you're fond of me, child," said Mrs. Carr, somewhat wistfully; "and it's the best of friends we've always been, and will be, I hope, to the end of the chapter."

"Oh, don't talk of the end," said Joan. "We're only at the beginning of it."

"They say that women never agree for long," said Mrs. Carr, thoughtfully. "Something or someone always spoils their friendship. But we're not likely to be rivals, Joan. My admirers won't be yours, nor yours mine; and indeed it's time I gave up troubling my head about men at all. I'm sure I'm very well off as I am."

. "And so am I," said Joan smiling.

"Well, I'm not so sure about that. You see, you've not had a taste of matrimony yet—and I—well—I've had a whole banquet of it—from soup to dessert—and it's left me too well satisfied to ever need another."

"Is Lady Kate a great friend of yours?" asked Joan, presently.

Mrs. Carr shrugged her handsome shoulder.

"As friends go in society," she said, "my place would be soon supplied in her affections; though for a whole season we have never passed a day without seeing each other."

"Isn't it a pity," said Joan, "that people waste so much time in pretence? Don't you think the world would be much better if we were all a little more truthful—a little more sincere?"

"My dear child, the world would be much better if we lived and acted up to the Sermon on the Mount, but it would mean a general revolution such as neither Anarchists nor Socialists ever contemplated. Church and State—everything social, legal, and religious, would be destroyed, and society would simply fall to the ground like a rotten apple. No—the whole machinery of the world has got itself complicated and entangled, and nothing can put it right. But why on earth should you and I trouble ourselves about abstruse questions like these?" she added, noting with surprise the little distressed pucker on Joan's smooth brow. "This world is good enough for me—and you too, I hope. And philosophy never was much in my line, either."

"Yet one must think sometimes," said Joan. "We can't always be like children, dancing over the green surface of a bog, forgetful of the danger beneath."

"Well, if you've a light foot, the surface is safe enough," said Mrs. Carr. "And dancing is pleasanter than crying any day. I can't have you growing so serious, Joan. You never used to be. What's come to you, child?"

"I don't quite know," said the girl, thoughtfully, "unless it is that I've got tired of the shams, and want to get at the root of things instead of just accepting them."

"You'll make yourself very unhappy," said Mrs. Carr, "and gain nothing after all."

"One can always gain something if one chooses," said Joan.

"Oh, yes, you can learn that romance is only a thing of the imagination; that love is a fancy, short-lived and unsatisfactory; that success means only gratified vanity; that all the relationships of life are based on selfishness or profit; that religion is only superstitious fear of an unknown hereafter, and the highest widom is embodied in the maxim—'Do good to thyself, and men will praise thee.'"

"That is the way Lady Kate talked," said Joan with a cold little smile. "It doesn't sound so well from your lips, Aunt

Bet."

"Ah, you'll believe it too, some day," said Mrs. Carr. "But I'd rather you kept your illusions a few years longer, my darling. It's not given to many of us to be happy very long."

"I don't know why we exact happiness as our right," said Joan.

, "We certainly don't try to deserve it."

"You are very depressing, my dear," said Mrs. Carr "Your talk with my old sea-captain seems to have had a bad effect on your spirits."

Joan laughed.

"Oh, no; he was calculated to raise my faith in humanity rather than shake it."

"Yes; he really believes in goodness and virtue, and your duty to your neighbour, and paying your debts, and going to church for the sake of going," said Mrs. Carr. "It is quite refreshing to hear him talk sometimes... But if we're going to drive we'd better be off, Joan. You'll find fresh food for your pessimistic views in the Row, my dear. It is the most complete satire on modern virtue and modern utility that one could wish to behold. And yet I enjoy it!"

"You enjoy a great many things, Aunt Bet," said the girl as she took up her lace sunshade. "I think it must be very delightful."

"That's the Irish temperament," said Mrs. Carr, as she gave a glance at the poise of her bonnet, and the set of her veil. "You ought to have it too. I'm sure Lucius never allowed a trouble to sit heavily on his shoulders for an hour of his life."

The girl smiled rather sadly.

"No," she said; "but that did not prevent their being thrown on other people's shoulders. Someone had to bear them, Aunt Bet."

"Ah, my dear, try to forget all that," said Mrs. Carr, with quick compunction. "Only remember you're young and pretty, and this life has many good and pleasant things in store for you. I'm sure it won't be hard to be a little happy now you have the chance!"

... The girl said nothing.

### CHAPTER VI.

#### SOME ADVANCED PEOPLE AND THEIR OPINIONS.

THE debate at the Advanced Women's Club seemed to Joan O'Rourke the most curious phase of feminine development that had yet come under her notice.

What were the exact uses of this meeting ground she failed to discover. Mrs. Carr opined that it was to give women a chance of airing grievances that had hitherto been relegated to the privacy of bedroom and nursery.

When she and her niece entered they found the two large rooms devoted to lectures and speechifying, crowded from corner to corner by a heterogeneous assemblage of their own sex. The chair was in the centre of the platform, and grouped around it were various women of varying age and somewhat masculine attire.

Their coats, collars and hair were all cut on severe and uncompromising principles, and anything so purely feminine as good looks or attractive manners seemed to have been discarded as rigorously as petticoats and *coiffures*.

The chairman (as she was styled) proceeded to business with that order and punctuality which generally distinguish the promises of the tradesman's circular, and go no further than the printer's ink.

This lady formally opened the debate by stating that the success of the club was now established—that its object and aim lay in the power of all members to carry out, that it was destined to a wide sphere of usefulness and importance, and that all the burning questions of the day—especially those relating to man and his essentially bad example and general incapacity—might be freely and frankly discussed. This opening speech having been received with vigorous applause, the chairman then

introduced a lady who was to read out the paper of the evening. The subject of the said paper to be afterwards taken up as the subject of debate by all present who cared to speak.

The lady introduced then stepped forward and commenced her paper with the brief announcement that it was her first appearance as a speaker, and she trusted the audience would be lenient in their criticisms. This being a rather weak method of procedure, receiving only the encouragement of a grim silence and a few ominous coughs.

The subject she proposed to discuss was "The Political Influence of Women," and in an almost inaudible voice she forthwith treated the assembly to a rambling and inconsequent discourse that seemed to bore them inexpressibly.

At last they grew tired of telling her to "speak up," and groaned, and fidgeted, and grumbled in whispers until the chairman pronounced that time was up, and that they were all now invited to question or criticise what had been said, but that each critic or questioner was limited to ten minutes for such discussion.

This announcement appeared to brisk them up amazingly. They popped up like soda-water corks, and began to talk. However, they failed signally in producing an argument worth listening to. The peculiarity of the debate consisted in the extreme strictness with which the audience limited the speaker to her ten minutes—"only that and nothing more"—and the extreme impatience with which each waited her own turn was only surpassed by her absolute inability to come to the point when she got it.

The climax of patience appeared to be reached, however, when a strange-looking woman mounted a chair at the back of the hall and began to favour them with a series of missionary experiences, in which the East End, a Baptist minister, and a grandfather's clock seemed intermingled. What these reminiscences had to do with women's influence on politics was, as Mrs. Carr murmured, a thing not to be understood of the common feminine intelligence. The chairman vainly tried to stem the torrent of the speaker's eloquence, or bring her to the point. Finally, just as the audience were becoming desperate, and a general revolution seemed imminent, the chair broke, and the speaker fell with a crash to the floor. She was assisted to her feet and hustled

downstairs to recover from the shock with more zeal than sympathy.

The chairman then announced that the debate was closed, and commenced to sum up the various points of dissertation in a brief speech.

"I observe," she said, in that the object of this debate has been to convince us all that women's influence on political life is enormous; that she works harder and more perseveringly than man; that she has greater opportunities of testing the worth and dishonesty of voters, and of winning votes; that she has infinitely more enthusiasm than man, and no scruples whatever in the means she employs to gain a worthy object, or the reverse. She is less disinterested, and less patriotic; she translates an 'appeal to the people' more literally than any man does, and won't take 'no' if she has made up her mind to have 'yes.' She would never give up her conscience to a political chief, or vote with a party because she was too lazy to differ from them; no, she would rather split them into fragments and have a general election every year. She would always be unconvincible and unreasonable when her interests were at stake, and always make rash engagements with foreign governments when they were not. She had a perfect right to the suffrage, and wouldn't rest until she obtained it, because what one woman has done, another woman always wants to do, and no Englishwoman would confess herself beaten by her American sisters!" (Great applause). "As we have invented the League of Primrose Dames, so in like manner shall we invent other leagues. and absorb other political opinions. We may become Unionists and Liberals, and abolish the Income Tax, and force the butchers to reduce prices which have been kept up since the cattle plague because Parliament prefers to fight on Home Rule instead of Home Economy; we may succeed in banishing the vulgarity and untruthfulness of advertisements which disfigure our walls and disgrace our streets, and give picturesque uniforms to policemen, and rational ones to our long-suffering soldiers. In fact, there need be no limits to our endeavours, and no bounds ' to our innovations. All we need is freedom from all bias, a wide-minded policy, and a perfect conviction of our own infallibility!" (Rapturous applause.) "This I take to be the outcome of expressed opinions to-night, and very excellent opinions

they are! Ladies, the debate is now over. I will take the usual vote of thanks for granted "—(applause)—" and suggest that you take our visitors and guests down to the tea-room for that refreshing cup which 'cheers but not inebriates.'" (Mild applause.)

. . . . . . .

"Well, what did you think of it?" asked Mrs. Carr, as they elbowed their way out of the crowd and heat and babel of voices.

"What is the use of it all? What good do they really do?" asked Joan.

"They imagine they do a great deal," answered Mrs. Carr.
"But I've been to two or three of these evenings, and they never seem to get any further. A debate and a discussion, and then some lukewarm tea. It doesn't look as if this was the right way to alter the world, or get the franchise, does it?"

"What is the other side of it? I mean the practical uses of the Club," asked Joan.

"Oh, they write letters and read newspapers, and a few of them get up evenings for the instruction of match girls or shoeblacks or something of that sort. One woman has founded a home for stray cats, and sends out circulars asking for subscriptions. Another belongs to a Temperance League, and is always speaking at public meetings about the iniquity of drinking beer, and the excellence of London water as a universal heverage for all classes! Another got up a Flower Girls' Costume League, but that didn't last long. The girls used to pawn them and go about in rags. The truth is, my dear, that they're all either soured old maids or disappointed and deserted wives, women about whom the other sex has long since ceased to interest itself, and who revenge themselves by abusing men and their general incompetence whenever they can find an audience. But stay, here comes one of their advanced lights; I'll introduce vou."

She turned to a tall, stern-faced woman, with iron-grey hair, cut short, and parted to one side, and wearing a tailor-made jacket and skirt of severe simplicity.

"How d'ye do, Mrs. Carr? I didn't know you were here tonight," she said. "Very poor debate. I can't imagine why the president lets mere novices take up valuable time by giving out their crude views on subjects we have long threshed out to better advantage."

"Oh, I thought the great point of your Club was the privilege granted to all members of free speech and free hearing on every subject," said Mrs. Carr innocently. "I see you are looking at my niece. Joan, my dear, allow me to introduce you to Mrs. Westall-Cray."

"Is this your first visit here?" asked Mrs. Westall-Cray, shaking hands in a quick, peremptory manner. "You mustn't judge of us by this specimen. But of course we have to be lenient, and everything must have a beginning."

Her eyes rested on the girl's beautiful face with a momentary envy. It was a pity that the champions of the New Womanhood were so very plain, and a greater pity that their more favoured sisters would persist in believing flirtation and marriage the only proper sphere for a woman.

Mrs. Carr turned away to speak to another acquaintance, and Mrs. Westall-Cray took possession of Joan, and gave her a rapid sketch of the birth, rise and progress of the club. It struck her that this handsome girl was just of an impressionable age, and she had a great belief in scattering the seeds of her opinions even by the wayside.

"We live in stirring times," she said. "Woman has at last made her voice heard, and intends to keep on making it heard. She has been too long content with an unsubstantial position, too long the victim of man's false code of morality, that demands thousands of victims as the price of his supremacy in the world. The day will come when we shall be supreme, and he relegated to the background of his own selfish vices. Believe me, the birth and regeneration of the new race rest with women. If only we can get them to master the long-implanted habits of indolence, and make them courageous, firm and self-assertive, we shall have sounded the first note of a challenge that no man can pretend to ignore!"

" And then?" asked Joan quietly.

"Then we shall work on our own lines, and by the light of a fearless independence. We shall be the rescuers and avengers of our down-trodden sex, and defy man to call us his inferiors any longer."

"And what will man do?" inquired the girl with interest.

"If you take up his work and usurp his prerogatives, what will become of him? A course of idleness would be infinitely more dangerous for him than for us. We can always make interests, even out of trivialities; he can't."

Mrs. Westall-Cray looked slightly discomposed. At the Club she was not accustomed to be told there were two sides to an argument when she was the arguer.

"Oh, there will always be work for both sexes," she said. "I see that these views are not altogether new to you; that you have begun to think for yourself—to look out on life and see that it holds more responsibilities for a woman than the choice of a gown, or the chance of a husband."

"I have thought a great deal of women's responsibilities and sufferings," said Joan, quietly, "but I fail to see any remedy for them in evading her natural duties, and taking up others for which neither sex nor nature have fitted her."

Mrs. Westall-Cray looked at her with pitying contempt.

"Ah," she said, "there speaks the old cowardly spirit—shackled and trammelled by conventional chains—false to its higher self—deaf to wiser counsels! My dear, if you would only join our class for the training and development of young womanhood, you would soon see things in a different light, and relegate all these old-fashioned opinions to the dust-heap of bygone prejudices! But I see you are not ripe for the effort yet. Doubtless you prefer to listen to men's cunning flatteries and honeyed words. The day will come, however, when you will have proved the worthlessness of both, and regret the wasted hours that might have been so much better employed."

Then Joan laughed.

"I assure you," she said, "you are quite mistaken. I am not such a frivolous fool as your words would imply. I have thought a great deal on these subjects, but it seems to me that women can always gain what they want, and what is desirable for them, by appealing to a man's good sense and upholding their own dignity. No one likes to be bullied and abused, and certainly he is having nothing but abuse at present at your hands."

"He deserves it," said Mrs. Westall-Cray, sternly. "He deserves the worst we can do—the worst we can think."

Joan flushed slightly.

" I should like some tea," she said quietly, seeing a vacant space at last at the buffet.

Mrs. Carr was standing there.

- "You're too late," she said, as Joan joined her. "The debate made everyone so thirsty that we late-comers can't get a drop. Why is it women are such bad caterers, I wonder?"
- "Let us go home," said Joan, softly. "This place is stifling, and the babel of voices is terrible."
- "What did you think of Mrs. Westall-Cray?" asked Mrs. Carr, glancing round.
- "I was wondering what she had done with her husband," answered Joan.
- "Oh, she divorced him two years ago!" said Mrs. Carr, genially.

(To be continued.)

## The Lake of Shadows.

LOUGH SWILLY, CO. DONEGAL.

ALTHOUGH the northern coast of Donegal is sculptured into numerous gulfs and bays of great beauty, the inlet which certainly carries off the palm for fine scenic effects is Lough Swilly—which has been poetically and appropriately named "The Lake of Shadows." This lovely firth of the Atlantic which in former times divided the principality of Inishowen from the Abbacy of Kilmacrennan, and whose course is chequered by many a green islet and many a sunny cove and bold headland -runs southward into the very heart of Donegal for thirty miles, notwithstanding that it is an arm of the great ocean. that is a peculiarity of the county. The sea obtrudes everywhere: and indeed in some places is so omnipresent as to utterly confuse all topographical ideas suggested by the configuration of the land. However, this circumstance only adds to the beauty and interest of the region. For while there is something unspeakably grand about the deeply-indented coast with its natural fortifications of rugged rocks and colossal cliffs against which the wild waves beat ceaselessly—the constant sheen and shimmer of water light up the inland scenes as nothing else could do. In fact as you take your stand on some lofty point from which you can look both seawards and landwards, you are amazed at the magnificence of the panorama spread before you; and at the same time you realise the strange, almost mysterious power which it exercises over the mind-although you seek in vain for words in which to describe it.

Meanwhile, the shores of The Lake of Shadows, beautiful as they are, acquire a still deeper interest from the many historic and prehistoric remains with which they are studded. Feudal strongholds, crumbling castles, relics of ecclesiastical architecture, and quaint old towers crop up everywhere. While in some parts there are monuments of vanished races of such extreme antiquity that their origin and even their very names are so completely forgotten that nothing remains to attest their exist-

ence except these rude works of their hands. Among the latter—that is to say, the prehistoric remains—the most curious is the far-famed Grianan of Aileach, which stands on the summit of a small mountain at the head of Lough Swilly. extraordinary Cyclopean structure is surrounded by three concentric ramparts of earth intermixed with uncemented stones. having a dun, or stone fortress, in the centre. The circular wall enclosing the cashel is not vertical, but rises with a curved incline—with galleries, terraces and doorways cut in its thickness; and some idea of the vast size of the whole building may be gathered from the fact that the outermost enclosure covers five acres of ground. At a little distance, the Grianan looks like a truncated cairn of Titanic dimensions; but on a nearer approach it is found, on the contrary, to be a carefully-constructed edifice, whose stones, though polygonal in form and wholly uncemented, are adjusted to fit each other perfectly. In short the masonry is of a character precisely similar to that of ruins found at Mycenæ and Dacia; and it likewise so closely resembles the Cyclopean remains scattered over Eastern lands, that this circumstance is regarded as furnishing an additional proof of the Oriental character of the ancient Irish. When, or by whom, the Grianan was erected is unknown. Even its original purpose is shrouded in mystery. But the generally-received opinion is, that it was both a temple dedicated to the sun (of which the aboriginal Irish were worshippers) and the palace of their northern kings, from the most remote antiquity down to the twelfth century, when it was demolished. In any case there is abundant evidence to show that it was an initial effort of savage man to construct a stone edifice which would prove an enduring monument of his workmanship; and tradition asserts that when Solomon was building his temple at Jerusalem, wild Irish kings were reigning in the Grianan, and the smoke of sacrifices to Baal, the sun-god, rose morning and evening from its walls. At a later period St. Patrick came here to preach Christianity; and having succeeded in converting the reigning king, Owen, the Druids were expelled from their stronghold. and Paganism was abolished throughout the land. After that, the Grianan assumed a different character, and became the theatre of many stirring scenes and hard-fought battles—until in 1101 the King of Munster captured and sacked it. Thus in all

respects the Grianan of Aileach is so replete with interest that it is well worthy of a visit.\* And as you stand amid the silence of its grim old walls, and glance at the barren wastes by which it is surrounded, you feel that on that lonely mountain-top, and amid such a scene, desolation ceases to be desolate and becomes sublime.

One of the prettiest towns on the storied banks of Lough Swilly is Rathmullan. It is charmingly situated on the very edge of the water, and its old grey houses creep up a hill which is clothed in purple and gold—the purple of heather and the gold of the ever-blooming gorse. The highest point at the rear of the town is Crockanaffrin-and from that coign of vantage the singular coast, owing to its innumerable indentations, looks far more like a series of Norwegian Fjords than an Irish scene. In the town of Rathmullan there are some interesting ruins—those of a Carmelite Priory, and an adjoining castle which had formerly belonged to MacSwyne of Fanad, who was a very celebrated personage in his day. The eastern part of the old Priory, which was used as a parish church until quite recently, exhibits considerable traces of Pointed Gothic architecture, and over the east window there still remains a figure of St. Patrick. Rathmullan, too, is distinguished as being the scene of one of the most interesting incidents in the annals of Tyrconnel. This event, known as "The Flight of the Earls," took place in 1607, and it marks an epoch in Irish history, because it facilitated the carrying out of the English scheme for the plantation of Ulster. But the two ill-fated earls-of Tyrone and Tyrconnel-who sailed from Rathmullan to France, and thence made their way to Rome, both died soon afterwards in the latter city.

Next comes Ramelton—which stands on the banks of the pretty river Lennon (once so famous for its pearls) at its junction with an estuary of Lough Swilly. This little town is a geographical parenthesis, as, instead of being bare and treeless like other villages and townlets in "Dark Donegal," it is girded by groves of noble forest trees, and has also the

<sup>&</sup>quot;God bless the grey mountains of Dark Donegal, And God bless royal Aileach the fairest of all! For she sits evermore like a Queen on her throne, And smiles on the valleys of green Inishowen."



<sup>\*</sup> Sir G. Gavan Duffy, in his beautiful ballad of "Inishowen," says:

unique attraction of a boulevard on the right bank of the river, which gives it quite a continental aspect. Thus Ramelton is a very fascinating little place—with delightful rides and drives in the neighbourhood, and having the ruined Abbey of Killydonnel within an easy walk. Killydonnel was founded in the 16th century, and a large portion of the side walls still remains, together with a turret or gable which is said to command one of the finest views in Ireland. This view embraces a landlocked sea, blue as a sapphire, bordered by a coast green to the water's edge, shaded with waving woodlands, and interspersed here and there with houses and villages which all look as if they had been placed where they are, with due regard to artistic effect. It is, in truth, a scene of singular beauty. And an additional element of interest is imparted to it by the legend attaching to Killydonnel. According to this old story, a party of marauders from Tyrone attacked the abbey one night and rifled it of everything they could find, including the bell. But the vessel in which they sailed with their booty was wrecked; and the bell having sunk to the bottom of Lough Swilly, it is said that once every seven years its sweet low chime is heard to issue thence at the still hour of midnight.

Close to Ramelton is Kilmacrennan-which though now a poor, depopulated village on the river Lennon, gives its name to the barony, and is celebrated as being the place where St. Columbkille was educated and where he founded an abbey for friars of the order of St. Francis. The present parish church is supposed to be part of this ancient Franciscan friary—the ruins of which consist of a slender, graceful tower, lighted by pointed windows in the upper stage, together with a few scanty remains of other buildings, surrounded by an enclosure. Kilmacrennan, despite its exiguity, is well worthy of a visit, as it is very prettily situated in the heart of a mountain valley, through which the Lennon rushes down in a picturesque stream. At a short distance from it. too, is the famous Rock of Doon—a splendid natural fortress rising sharply and abruptly from the ground, on which the O'Donnells, Princes of Tyrconnel, were inaugurated or crowned by priests whom they regarded as being descended from St. Columbkille.

Near the rock there is a holy well, whose waters are accredited with the unusual power of healing all diseases, and whose tradi-

tional sanctity has evidently not been impaired by the flight of time. For mementoes of the pilgrims in the shape of sticks, crutches and fluttering rags of various hues are always to be found in close proximity to the sacred water; where they form what painters call such a pretty bit of colour that they thus contribute their quota to the beauty as well as the interest of the scene.

It is interesting to know that the parish of Kilmacrennan is locally called Termon, a name which is to be traced to the pagan Romans, and which was afterwards adopted by the Christians and applied to their own sanctuaries. The Roman deity, Terminus, who presided over landmarks and boundaries, was always represented by a stone placed erect. And in the townland of Barnes in this parish there is yet to be seen a most curious collection of dallans, or standing stones, with various incised markings which would offer a wide field for speculation to the antiquarian and the archæologist. Besides, the word terminus was afterwards used by the Latin Church to designate a territorium ecclesiasticum—the limits of which were usually pointed out by stone crosses; and ultimately the Irish word termon came to signify a city of refuge. Due north of the Rock of Doon is the celebrated Gap of Barnesbeg, which lies midway between the villages of Kilmacrennan and Creeslough, and which is certainly one of the most romantic passes in Ulster. Indeed, directly you enter this grim defile you come under its spell and feel the endemic charm of the scene. For the vast blocks of quartz and granite which are strewn about the ravine in wild disorder and which no doubt are the result of some volcanic upheaval when the earth was young, carry the mind back to a far distant past, to which they seem to link us. And, on the other hand, the contrast between the mighty mountains and the gentler life-the tender beautiful grasses, flowers, and shrubs, with which their riven sides in many parts are draped, must strike every beholder; while it sinks deeply into the heart of the thinker and close observer, who sees more in the outward and visible forms of nature than meets the eye. On emerging from the Gap of Barnesbeg, too, a noble view is obtained of Errigal—the highest point in Ulster—which when taken in conjunction with the neighbouring Lake of Glenveagh forms a picture of such mingled beauty and savage grandeur, that one

wonders why people go to Switzerland when they have such enchanting scenes close at hand. As for Errigal, no traveller in these parts should omit to make an excursion to its summit. He can do so by taking a car from the Gweedore Hotel (which is well worth a visit in itself); and as Errigal rises rapidly, the ascent may be made in two hours. The upland path for the most part lies over a shingly surface, consisting principally of loose stones so purely white that they make the beautiful cone look from a distance like a snow-clad Alp; and it is probably to this circumstance that it owes its name—the word Errigal signifying The White Peak. On reaching the summit of the mountain, which is only a few feet in circumference—you are encircled by abysses so dark, so deep, so silent and so fraught with mystery, that the whole scene seems unreal and phantasmal, and suggests the idea that you are not standing on solid ground. To the south rises Slieve Snaght-which by some optical delusion appears to be quite close at hand, as if you could step over to it without the aid of seven-leagued boots; and joined to it are the peaks of Derryveagh, which enclose a region so utterly barren and sterile that it resembles a bit of dead nature. Then comes a series of mountain tops which look like the waves of a tumultuous sea that had been arrested and transfixed in their flow, and which extend as far as Benulben and the other ranges of Northern Connaught. With these, too, are linked the mountains of Tyrone and Derry; while more to the north are seen the hills of Bonnie Scotland, which rise in dreamlike splendour in the distance and look like

#### "The bright confines of another world." \*

Buncrana, on the eastern shore of the Swilly, must also have a word of mention, as it has now become a health resort and is most favourably placed—being protected on the east by the heath-clad slopes of Meenkeeragh Hill, and on the south by Mouldy Mountain. It was a town of some importance in the reign of Elizabeth. And though after the confiscation of Ulster it fell into decay, it was laid out in its present form in 1717, and still looks sufficiently imposing with its fine old bridge spanning the castle river, and its square keep, which was a stronghold of the O'Dohertys in the 15th century. But that for which Buncrana

is most remarkable at the present day is its sunsets—which are indescribably beautiful. Say that the afternoon has been gloomy and cheerless-for in this rainy region the days are misty and mournful and there is generally moisture in the air and clouds in the sky. But at Buncrana in the sunset hour that pleasant promise "at evening time there shall be light" is amply fulfilled. For the clouds disperse and pass away; the light is like clear shining after rain; and as Meenkeeragh flings its violet shadow across the town, the streets turn to a warm purple in the glow from its tinted summit and the blue and rose of the sky. Outside, and beyond the shadow, the sunset radiance rests like a blessing on the distant hills and fields, and flashes on the shadowy lough until its waters glisten like molten silver. within, men and women gather together in knots at the corners as usual, and children's happy voices are heard as they play about the streets in careless glee-the faces of all seem transfigured by the glory of the clouds, and that wondrous reflected light which for the time being has power to change the aspect of all things and turn clay and stones to gold.

Running parallel with the Swilly for some time is the beautiful estuary called Mulroy Bay-whose broken, rock-bound coast-line is unrivalled for diversity of feature and incident. At the head of this bay stands Milford, whose houses rise on a steep hill and are surrounded by such a rich belt of woodland that the town looks quite picturesque from a distance. On a nearer approach, however, the charm vanishes. For the houses are small, irregular, and not too clean; while in some cases they wear such a poverty-stricken aspect that judging from external evidence the occupants must find the struggle for existence a hard one to maintain. A very strong Scotch element prevails in Milford, and it is said that some years ago nearly all its inhabitants were named Buchanan. A curious anecdote is told regarding the prevalence of this name. One night a belated Scotch traveller after having applied in vain at house after house for a night's lodging, at length exclaimed in despair, "Is there na one Christian in "No," said his interlocutor, "we're all Buchanans the toon?" and Mackeens."

But though Milford looks as if it were never washed except by the rain, or swept but by the winds of heaven, it is a place which every traveller in these parts should visit—because it is a centre whence so many delightful excursions radiate, and the surrounding neighbourhood is full of interest and charm. short, there is something there for everybody. Old-world relics for the archæologist, lovely bits of landscape for the artist, and any amount of hills to climb for the pedestrian—as it lies in the very heart of the mountain district. The first place to be visited is Rosgarrow, which is only half a mile from the town. It was there that Miss Patterson, who became the wife of Jerome Bonaparte, and whose life history is so full of pathos and romance -was born, and lived, until she emigrated to America with her father. Her fate was a very sad one; as she was ultimately divorced from the man to whom she had given her hand and heart, by the decree of his Imperial and imperious brother. But the people in this neighbourhood still call her the Queen of France. And as her marriage was perfectly legal and both her sons by Jerome were consequently legitimate, if the whirligig of fortune ran smoothly, who could tell but that one of the descendants of this hapless lady might some day wield the sceptre in the sunny land of France! Meanwhile the house at Rosgarrow which had been a farmstead, is now in ruins. It might indeed be called a tragedy in stone. For the heaps of broken masonry have so little coherence as an agglomeration, and are so completely without form and void, that they have dwindled down to mere débris. Moreover, this desolate ruin lies in a very eerie spot amid a dense wood at the foot of the Cashelmore Hill-and is so utterly secluded and withdrawn from the outer world, that no sound ever breaks the deathlike silence that reigns there, except the sighing of the wind among the trees by which it is shrouded on all sides.

The beautiful waterfall called the Cascade of Bunlin is close to Rosgarrow; and not far off are the Cratlagh woods, near which Lord Leitrim was murdered in 1878. One instinctively associates dark deeds with the "dark places of the earth"—which as the Psalmist says—"are full of the habitations of cruelty." But Bunlin Valley is, on the contrary, fair and smiling; and with its sparkling river and picturesque old bridge, its vividly green sward and bonnie woodlands, it is quite idyllic in some of its characteristics, and is certainly one of the most sylvan scenes in Donegal. The Bunlin river, too, is exquisitely pretty. It is full of unwritten poetry, and in its various moods and devious

course, it is in many parts an eloquent exponent of the chances and changes of human life. And yet there is one discordant feature in this fair scene. For close to the bridge there stands an old, crumbling house, called Bunlin Cottage, which is a real curiosity, and looks as if it were in the very last stage of decay. Indeed, with its tottering chimneys, broken roof, shattered windows, rotting door, and mouldering stonework, it is a veritable architectural scarecrow, and looks so hopelessly dilapidated and tumbledown, that you cannot help fancying that the stones must merely keep together from force of habit. Nevertheless, this crazy old tenement has its uses from one point of view. For it strikes such a sharp note of contrast—thereby accentuating the fairness of its surroundings—that it could not be dispensed with without artistic loss.

The drive from Bunlin to Rosapenna is an exceedingly pleasant one, and on arriving at the latter you see the famous many-coloured, drifting sands which have been so disastrous in their effects. In 1874 these encroaching sands completely overwhelmed Rosapenna Castle (belonging to the Earl of Boyne), and at other times they have destroyed the crops, covered the surface of whole townlands, and in many instances obliged the inhabitants to remove their dwellings to safer parts of the district. Nevertheless on a bright day and when touched by fine atmospheric effects they present a most striking spectacle. For in some places the white sand glitters in the sun with almost blinding brilliancy; and in others—when recent showers have fallen-it is variegated with streaks of numerous colours, like veins of polished marble, and is so thick-set with glistening shells of every conceivable tint and hue that the whole scene forms a mosaic of great beauty and brilliancy.

The neighbourhood of Rosapenna, too, is rich in legendary lore, and it is supposed to have been anciently a place of some note, as it contains the ruins of so many Megalithic structures—such as cave dwellings, cities of refuge, and cromlechs, etc. But among the old buildings which are not in ruins, Doe Castle certainly occupies the forefront. This ancient stronghold of the McSwynes stands on a bold, projecting rock, and was protected on its western side by a drawbridge and portcullis. In later days it belonged to the Harte family, and General Harte, who was present at the battle of Seringapatam and the capture of

Tippoo Sultan, lived there in Oriental magnificence for many years. Strange to say, he brought over to Ireland Tippoo Sultan's body-servant—a Hindoo whom he had taken prisoner, and who used to sleep at his own door every night dressed in Eastern costume and fully armed. It is said that this man became so much attached to his Irish master that when the latter was killed by an accident he died of a broken heart. The cannon captured at Seringapatam are still to be seen on a grassy lawn sloping downward to the sea from the outward walls of Doe Castle, but they have sunk into a green, ivy-clad repose, and now look quite peaceful and harmless.

The principal excursion from Rosapenna is to Torry Island, and, with a fair day, a cloudiess sky, and the sun glancing brightly on the blue waters, a more enjoyable one could scarcely be imagined. The distance is only about ten miles from point to point, but it affords you an opportuity of seeing the far-famed scenery of Melmore Head, Sheephaven Bay, and the Horn. When the vessel stands boldly out to sea, too, the panorama is magnificent-embracing as it does, hill and dale, mountain and glen, waving woodlands and dark defiles, including the wonderful promontory of Hornhead with its towering cliffs and celebrated caves. Thus, if the wind is favourable the transit seems all too short, and you soon see the extraordinary little island looming before you and rising from the sea like a castellated city. For on the eastern side the tall cliffs are amazingly fine and assume every possible form of structural grandeur-tower and turret, spire and pinnacle, and battlement and bastion all being so well simulated that the illusion is almost complete. But Torry, though only three miles long, is an exceptional little place in every respect. There are no rats or vermin of any kind on its sacred soil; the potato disease is unknown there, and with the exception of the post office, etc., none of the houses have windows. Moreover, once upon a time, it considered itself a kingdom and had a king, and the inhabitants until comparatively lately used to say when about to cross over to the mainland, that they were going to Ireland.\* The cultivation of the island is chiefly confined to the

<sup>\*</sup> It is related that about fifty years ago when some of the Torry islanders went over to the mainland for the first time, they were so astonished to see trees that they carried away leaves and branches to show to their families when they returned home.



southern part and the lowlands, as the north is exposed to hurricanes, when the drifted spray levels all before it. They have, however, a sign by which the coming season can be forecasted. For when the ravens build in the north they know that no danger is to be anticipated, as those wise birds would not expose their young to the fury of the storm.

Torry among its other attractions is as old as the hills, having been colonised by the immediate descendants of Ham (so says "The Annals of the Four Masters") shortly after the flood. These early Colonists were a gigantic race called the Formorians. who fought a fierce battle here with the Nemedians, and one of whose chiefs erected a castle on the island, the remains of which still exist. This lonely castle, called Connaing's Tower, stands on a precipitous cliff at the eastern angle of the island, and its rocky basis, in addition to being 300 feet high, is extremely difficult of access also. Of course the oldest remain on Torry island is Connaing's Tower; but as it possessed an ancient civilisation it likewise contains many traces of early religions and superstitions. Foremost among these are the ruins of the Seven Churches of Torry, a round tower called the Bell House, two crosses, and a monastery founded by St. Columbkille in the fifth century. The latter continued to flourish during many ages and was not demolished until the reign of Elizabeth. Attached to the ruined Abbey, too, there is a very curious old graveyard dedicated to an ancient saint and containing the tombs of his followers. The present Lord of Torry has a name that is a curiosity in itself-Benjamin St. John the Baptist Joule; he is a Hebrew, and an absentee, and, though the ownership of the place may confer some distinction on him, he does not reap any material benefit from it, as the inhabitants pay no rent. They are a fine, hardy, independent race, who live by fishing and making kelp; and having no roads or landmarks of any kind on their island home, they are as free as air—their highway being over the ocean billows, and their fences the bulwarks of their fishing craft. Indeed it would not be too much to say that there is a sort of assimilation between the place and the people. Torry Island is rough and rugged, with strongly marked physical features, and so are its inhabitants. Besides, surrounded as they are by old-world relics, the subtle power of hereditary sentiment seems to have rendered their minds

peculiarly susceptible to the influences of superstition. And owing to their isolated position, and being separated from the rest of the world by distance, the sea, lack of communication, and other alienating causes, they are so strongly conservative about old manners and customs, and cling so tenaciously to their ancient traditions, that they are still a primitive people who seem almost like an anachronism in the present day. Thus from every point of view Torry, which is called the Iona of Donegal, is a very remarkable little place. And though with its girdle of bitter, barren rocks, its desolate, verdureless soil, its pallid hues, its silence and its solitude, it possesses many of the characteristics of a lunar landscape, and has no beauty or comeliness of aspect whatever, it is nevertheless so intensely interesting that every visitor to the lovely Lake of Shadows should certainly make a pilgrimage to its lonely neighbour, Torry Island, also.\*

# A Case for the Authors' Society.

By E. N. LEIGH FRY.

Author of "JANET DELILLE," "A SCOT'S THISTLE," &c.

HAD Miss Winifred Carmichael, rising authoress, not attended the dinner of the Incorporated Society of Authors—or had Mrs. Cristopher Smith, authoress in her zenith, been present-or, on the other hand, had Mr. Francis Hodson, editor of the Hyde Park Magazine, not received an invitation, the complication could not have arisen. Possibly, even, had Miss Carmichael's aunt, Miss Marion Bond, been able to accompany her niece, as was at first intended, circumstances might have taken a different turn; but as she was recovering from influenza, dining-out was obviously injudicious, and she suggested that under the circumstances Winnie might invite as her guest old Mr. Waters. Winnie declined on the score of that gentleman being "three parts deaf and the rest idiotic," and casually mentioned the name of Jim Blakeney, whom Miss Bond, on her part, at once disposed of by branding him with contumely as "a young unmarried man." Winnie thereupon pointed out that a respectable young woman of five-and-twenty might safely go alone into any

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<sup>\*</sup> It was off the coast of Torry that the last determined battle for Irish freedom was fought in 1798, when the French squadron was defeated by Sir T. B. Warren's fleet.

respectable society. She added she considered herself respectable, and was of opinion the authors, taken in the bulk, might be similarly qualified; therefore, she would save a guinea and attend the dinner unaccompanied. Miss Bond murmured that in her youth such things could not have been, and her niece indulgently agreed with her. At the same time she wrote to the secretary for a ticket, and when the night arrived, she set forth alone.

Mrs. Cristopher Smith had also fully intended being present, in company with her uncle, Mr. Banbury, but at the last moment her youngest son, with the perversity of childhood, developed measles; and Mrs. Smith, in addition to having produced "Frank Aspinal," "Walter Thorp," and other large three volumes, being an excellent mother, promptly removed her diamonds and heliotrope brocade and stayed at home.

As for Mr. Hodson, his friend Mr. Brooke, a member of the Society, asked him to go as his guest, it having struck him as somewhat humorous to introduce a defenceless wolf into the midst of the sheep assembled in their strength; and the editor, seeing the point, accepted. I may mention this happened at an early period of the society's existence, as since then the sheep have formed the habit of offering hospitality to their pet wolves.

Winifred Carmichael, though able to preserve a stately and composed exterior in most circumstances, was at heart rather shy—not that anyone would have guessed it, and her calm and dignified demeanour had been of incalculable service to her when dealing with publishers and editors. She was beginning to make her way, and other people besides herself felt that she was "rising." Still, when the evening arrived, it was with some trepidation she plunged alone into the reception rooms where the Society of Authors and their friends were assembling. She greeted one or two acquaintances, and then occupied herself in studying the plan of the dinner-tables which had been given her as she entered, and in discovering where she was to sit. At her table there appeared to be none she knew, on her right hand was the name of an unknown man, and on her left the simple but vague announcement "guest."

The move to the dining-room began, and she found herself drifting along in the stream. Accidentally she dropped her plan, but as it was not convenient in the crowd to stoop and

pick it up, she left it. She had impressed on herself her precise position at table, and she thought she was equally sure of the table itself. It was that indicated as E, not far from the door at which she entered. She seated herself in what she was satisfied was her allotted place, and on her right hand found, as she expected, an unknown man, while on her left there was, as there should have been, a "guest"—as a matter of fact, the editor of Hyde Park.

When Hodson examined his plan before entering the dininghall, he had been pleased, from the editorial point of view, to find he was to have next to him the celebrated Mrs. Cristopher Smith, and when, having taken his place, he glanced at his neighbour, he was, as a mere man, extremely satisfied. Mrs. Cristopher Smith, though she had the stately manners suited to an eminent person, looked younger than her years-Hodson was aware she must be about thirty-five. She had the fine head and bust he had observed in her pictured presentments, otherwise it did not strike him the likenesses he had seen were good. but the illustrated papers often fail in that respect. Altogether, Mrs. Smith was a fine-looking woman, indeed, a woman with a decided charm, reflected the mere man, and if - the editor coming uppermost—he could succeed in getting her to contribute a tale to his magazine, he might he able to look back upon the Authors' Dinner as both pleasant and profitable.

He seized an opportunity of passing her the salt, being possibly unaware this is an unlucky way of commencing an acquaintance. Miss Carmichael thanked him, and the editor promptly made an observation about the heated state of the atmosphere. Winifred responded. She had no intention of sitting in silence throughout the evening, and she had already grasped the fact that Mr. Banbury, on her other side, had come there to dine, and had the courage of his intentions. Hodson was not long in discovering that Mrs. Cristopher Smith had a capacity for light and bright talk which he had scarcely looked for, and he felt no regret that his friend Brooke had dived so deeply into conversation with a man on the other side of the table as to have no attention left for his guest. Miss Carmichael, on her part, congratulated herself on possessing so pleasant and intelligent a neighbour-although unaware of his identity. Presently he enlightened her.

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"Of course," he said, touching the plan which lay beside his plate, "I know to whom I am speaking; may I introduce myself to you as the editor of *Hyde Park*?"

Miss Carmichael smiled and bowed.

"Oh," she said, "Mr. Hodson. I am pleased to meet you in this way." And her mind reverted to a story he had declined a year before. Possibly, she might try him with another.

Hodson was considering how long a serial from Mrs. Smith's pen would be likely to occupy the pages of *Hyde Park*. At a moderate computation, he thought about three years; and feeling dubious how this might suit his public, relinquished the idea.

"Do you ever write short stories?" he asked.

"Yes," Miss Carmichael replied calmly, though possibly with some slight internal amusement, as she thought of that which he himself had had the privilege of rejecting. She was, however, perfectly aware that no editor can be expected to remember all he has done in that particular direction, and did not explain.

"Perhaps, some day, when you have leisure from your more important work, you will let me have one," said Hodson.

There were two things about this speech which surprised Winnie. One was the tone of deference in which it was made; and the other was that the editor of *Hyde Park* should describe the serial she was running in a penny weekly as "important work." She, however, preserved the composure she had learned stood her in such good stead, and replied in a tone which the real Mrs. Cristopher Smith might have envied:

"I shall be glad to do so."

Hodson smiled in a satisfied way; he felt he had done enough as editor, and for the rest of the evening was mere man. He had, in fact, reached the point of wondering if Mr. Cristopher Smith was worthy of possessing this very charming woman before the authors began to make little speeches in appreciation of themselves, and reflecting, but only ever so lightly—the dinner had been good and the wines carefully selected—on their publishers. And, finally, when the company began to disperse, the editor of *Hyde Park* accompanied the lady downstairs and handed her into a hansom with a care which it was only proper to bestow on such a writer.

"Good-night," he said, "and let me thank you for a very pleasant evening. What address shall I tell the man?"

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: But Miss Carmichael had already given her directions through the trap, and Hodson had not the privilege of repeating them for her. He stood on the pavement, gazing after the hansom, with some undefined feeling that should the broad Atlantic chance to close over Mr. Cristopher Smith on his return from America, where some paper had mentioned he was transacting business in relation to his wife's copyright, the loss might possibly be repaired.

Mr. Brooke had by this time disappeared, having evidently given up hopes of his guest's society, and the editor of *Hyde Park* departed along Holborn in solitary meditation.

It occurred to Miss Carmichael that, as a somewhat pleasant jest, she might alter the story she had previously submitted to Hodson, and let it try its chance with him again. She touched it up in the course of the next few days, and one morning took it down to the *Hyde Park* office. She had asked for Mr. Hodson, and a clerk was about to enquire if he were able to receive her, when a door in the passage at the back opened and the editor himself stepped into the office.

- "How do you do?" said Winnie promptly. "I have brought a short story as you asked, and if, when you have looked it over, you find——"
- "Pray walk in," said Hodson blandly, "and we can discuss matters in my room."

Winnie stepped forward in the direction indicated, while he remained behind to intimate that his interview with Mrs. Cristopher Smith was not to be interrupted.

"This is the story," said Winnie, laying it on the editorial writing-table. "It is about six thousand words. I don't think the idea is hackneyed, and—but, of course, you will see when you look it over."

Hodson was turning over the pages in a casual way.

"What beautiful manuscript!" he observed.

"I always try to write clearly," Winnie returned; "a young author stands very little chance if she doesn't."

Hodson was, perhaps, a little surprised to hear her describe herself as a young author; in the great Mrs. Cristopher Smith it seemed an unnecessary, if a beautiful, humility.

"As to terms," he proceeded, taking the acceptation of the

story for granted, and mentioning a sum which nearly made Miss Carmichael utter an ejaculation. Her habit of self-restraint came to her aid, and she simply bowed assent and looked unmoved. Though to herself she said:

"If I am worth that to Hyde Park, it is time I made Jones of the Battersea take a more liberal view of the situation."

"We shall have it in next month's," Hodson observed, mentally ousting a story by a young author, which had occupied a prospective place in the ensuing number. "And your address is? Where shall we forward the proofs?"

"You will find my name and address on the back," Winnie said, and feeling nothing further remained to be arranged, she rose to take leave.

The editor accompanied her through the office to the outer door, where he pressed her hand gently at parting; and returning to his own apartment, he meditated, firstly, that he had done a good stroke of business, and secondly, that Mrs. Cristopher Smith was the most charming woman he had ever met.

Winnie walked along the street, musing on the very extraordinary turn of events.

"Am I going to awake and find myself famous?" she considered. "Or is it—can it be only that he——" She broke off, and after a moment, with a sudden stamp of her foot, she went on, "Oh, if I thought my stuff was going to be accepted and paid for like that because—because a man admired me, I'd—I'd go back and punch his head!"

But she didn't.

One point connected with Miss Carmichael's work might have been improved: she wrote on flimsy paper. Her pages occasionally came adrift and got lost, her publishers and editors being worried thereby. Something of the sort happened now.

Hodson was, as it chanced that day, too busy to read Mrs. Cristopher Smith's story during office hours. The manuscript lay on his table pushed about amongst other papers, and he did not discover till he had taken it home with him at night, that the last page had disappeared. Apparently, it mattered little. Obviously the concluding sentence of the story was on the last page left; a couple of words would end it; quite inevitable words, and the editor added them in pencil. Her signature was also gone, as well as

her name and address. The latter Hodson looked out in a directory and wrote on the back of the manuscript; that is, he wrote the address of Mrs. Cristopher Smith, then he turned to the first page, and beneath the title, "A Cotton Pocket-handker-chief," he inscribed the words "By Mrs. Cristopher Smith."

"The whole thing," he mused, gazing at it with some satisfaction, "is unlike anything she has done before. There is a bright, light touch, one would think her incapable of—till one knew her, of course. There is a delightful incongruity even in such a title in connection with her name. 'A Cotton Pockethandkerchief.' Yes, it ought to catch on, and it is a clever story, too—very clever," he concluded, with blissful oblivion of the previous occasion when it had been through his hands.

When the proofs were ready, they were despatched to Mrs. Cristopher Smith, and, had she received them, subsequent events might have been otherwise. But she was airing her youthful family at Brighton after their measles, and as she wanted to have a complete rest herself, she had left instructions that letters and papers were not to be forwarded. So the proofs of "A Cotton Pocket-handkerchief" lay undisturbed, among other postal accumulations, on her hall table.

A slip had accompanied the proofs requesting their speedy return, and when they did not re-appear, Hodson called to enquire for them—mere man in the ascendant when the editor went in personal pursuit of proofs! He ascertained the fact of Mrs. Cristopher Smith's absence, and, there being no more time to lose, finally made the corrections himself.

Mrs. Cristopher Smith was giving herself a perfect rest from current literature. But for this, she might have learned from an advance notice that she was about to contribute a story to Hyde Park, and subsequently, she would have seen how, in the notices of the monthly magazines, the reviewers one and all devoted their best energies to this story, treating it, in fact, as the feature of the month. But of all this she was entirely ignorant till one morning she received a letter from her uncle, Mr. Banbury, part of which ran thus:

"I must congratulate you on your new departure. Your story in Hyde Park came upon me as a complete surprise. It is quite charming, and personally, my dear Dorothea, I am grateful

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to you for writing something which even one of my limited capacities can read and enjoy. Of course, you have seen the reviews; on this occasion 'their unanimity is wonderful.'"

Mrs. Cristopher Smith dropped the letter, and rose to her feet.

"Who," she ejaculated, "can have perpetrated this infamous fraud?"

She was a woman of action. In five minutes she had set her house in order, put on her bonnet and departed to the station; having only time to purchase her ticket, a copy of *Hyde Park*, and all the weekly reviews she could lay her hands on before the train started. Then she settled down to read, and as she read her countenace darkened. She took the story first, and the title was enough in itself to make her shudder. "A Cotton Pocket-handkerchief, by Mrs. Cristopher Smith."

"A Cotton Pocket-handkerchief!" And by Mrs. Cristopher Smith! By the author of "Walter Thorp!" Was everybody mad?

She read it through. So they thought she had written this! This trash! Mrs. Smith flung the magazine from her, and took up the reviews. The *National Nagger* came first; it had never liked her, and always sneered at her work when possible. This time they would have found something to justify sneers. She read:

"Mrs. Cristopher Smith has developed a new style, and verily, her last state is vastly better than her first. Had her name not been appended to the brilliant story in *Hyde Park*, we confess nothing would have induced us to believe her pen produced it. Let any unfortunate mortal, wearied with the eternal tedium of 'Walter Thorp,' take up this bright little story and be refreshed. The sparkling style, the quick observation—"

It was too much! Mrs. Smith flung the Nagger after Hyde Park, and took up the Weekly Rasper; it had been her steady friend—What would it say now to this awful falling off?

"Everything written by Mrs. Cristopher Smith is worthy the attention of the thoughtful reader, and her story in this month's Hyde Park is no exception. In some respects it even strikes us

as showing an advance on anything she has yet produced. There is an indefinable charm about 'A Cotton Pocket-handkerchief;' which we do not seem to have experienced—at least, to the same extent—in any previous work of hers."

Mrs. Smith groaned aloud. They were all the same; everyone approved the wretched story. Those who were generally
for her, were for her more than ever; and those who, as a rule,
were against her, now, so to speak, turned round and patted her
on the back, congratulating her on her change of style. The
only one which she did not desire to tear into fragments and
cast from the carriage window to the four winds of heaven was
the *Bystander*. It was behind with its reviews, and did not so
much as allude to "A Cotton Pocket-handkerchief." Sometimes
it is the tortoise who scores.

Winnie Carmichael's aunt had had a second attack of influenza, and her niece had been in constant attendance on her. It left little time for newspaper reading; and not having received her proofs, Winnie had concluded that her story was, after all, not to appear until later. One morning, however, her aunt being better, she sent out for some weekly and monthly literature, and about the period that Mrs. Cristopher Smith was casting the same from her in the train, Winnie was cutting pages and glancing casually over them, seeking something that might interest her aunt. She had made about four slices into Hyde Park when she was confronted by "A Cotton Pocket-hand-kerchief. By Mrs. Cristopher Smith."

By Mrs. Cristopher Smith! What new form of perfidy in editors was this? One that surely even the Authors' Society had not yet brought to light. She would write to the secretary about it. She would enlist Mr. Besant himself. She would——Winnie caught at the reviews and turned up the magazine notices. Yes! "Mrs. Cristopher Smith's charming story." "Mrs. Cristopher Smith's new style." "Mrs. Cristopher Smith has seldom done anything better."

Winnie arose. "Aunt Marion," she said, "I am going out. There is some business I must attend to."

"Do, my dear," her aunt assented; "you are growing quite pale from being shut up so long."

Miss Carmichael was certainly rather pale, but before she reached the office of the *Hyde Park Magazine* there was an ominous red spot in the middle of each cheek and a dangerous flash in her eve.

"I want to see Mr. Hodson," she announced.

The words and tone were not exactly those in general use by people desiring to interview the editor, but Mrs. Cristopher Smith was Mrs. Cristopher Smith, and the clerks appreciated the fact.

"Take a seat, madam," one said politely, "while I let Mr. Hodson know you are here."

Miss Carmichael was beyond such trivialities as seats, and remained standing in the centre of the office, clutching her copy of *Hyde Park*.

"If you will walk this way, madam, Mr. Hodson will see you." Winnie followed to the editorial sanctum, the door closed behind her, and she, stepping forward and disregarding the editor's smile and proffered hand, opened the magazine and pointed with her finger to the fateful words "A Cotton Pockethandkerchief. By Mrs. Cristopher Smith."

"What," she said, "is the meaning of that?"

The editor regarded her with puzzled enquiry. Obviously she was not pleased, but why he could not conceive.

"I am afraid I don't understand," he said. Then, as her only legitimate cause for complaint occurred to him, he added:

"The proofs were forwarded. We waited as long as possible, and then I called myself and learned you were out of town. It was impossible to delay the publication of the magazine longer."

"Proofs!" said Miss Carmichael, contemptuously, "who spoke of proofs? How dare you," slowly and emphatically, "how—dare you—attribute my story—to—Mrs. Cristopher Smith?"

"To whom else could it be attributed?" asked Hodson, help-lessly, serious doubts of Mrs. Cristopher Smith's sanity beginning to assail him.

Winnie turned on him with a look and tone which might have cowed the most hardened villain, publisher or editor, in London.

"To me," she said.

Hodson pushed his hair back, retreated a step, and gazed at the irate authoress.

"I don't understand," he repeated. And at that moment the

door opened, admitting a puzzled and slightly alarmed clerk, with a card in his hand.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, "but a lady insisted on seeing you at once, and—and that's the name."

He dropped the card into the editor's hand as though he were glad to be rid of it.

Hodson looked at it and read in perfectly legible characters:

### "Mrs. Cristopher Smith."

There was no time for comment; the owner of the card had followed it without waiting for permission, and the editor of *Hyde Park* was confronted by Mrs. Cristopher Smith—the genuine article. And directly his eyes rested on her, he recognised she was genuine; the illustrated papers had not been so very wrong after all. Undoubtedly this was the author of 'Walter Thorp."

Hodson's heart sank nearly into his boots; as an editor he recognised he had somehow got into an awful mess, and as a mere man the conviction was forced upon him that the other—the charming other—must be a fraud.

"I," said the newcomer, "am Mrs. Cristopher Smith."

"I see it," said Hodson feebly. "But," turning to Winnie, "I thought it was you."

Mrs. Smith faced round.

"Oh," she said, "are you the—person who has been fraudulently impersonating me?"

"How dare you," said Miss Carmichael, "apply such expressions to me? If you are Mrs. Cristopher Smith, perhaps you will explain what you mean by stealing my story."

"Stealing!—your story!" gasped Mrs. Smith. "Is it likely I should steal your story, whoever you may be?"

The editor looked anxiously at the door, but Mrs. Cristopher Smith was between him and the means of exit.

"I," said Winnie, throwing up her head, "am Winifred Carmichael."

"By Jingo 1" The observation was Hodson's, and he looked up with an expression of more intelligence than, it must be confessed, he had yet worn.

"Winifred Carmichael," repeated Mrs. Smith. "And my name has been attached to your story!"

"Have you read the reviews?" Miss Carmichael enquired, with deferential politeness.

Mrs. Cristopher Smith did not snort—a lady who can run into six editions in three months, naturally would not—but she made an inarticulate sound pregnant with meaning.

"Have you observed," pursued Winnie courteously, "that your style has improved, that you have never written more brilliantly, that——"

"Ladies," broke in the editor, "I implore you---"

He had better have held his peace. Both the tall, handsome women turned, and, metaphorically, fell upon him.

"As to you," Mrs. Cristopher Smith began, "you, who have promoted this fraud, you, who have profited by it—if there is any virtue at all in the law of the land, you shall be made to feel it."

"Undoubtedly, you shall," proceeded Miss Carmichael. "I shall see if the law courts of this country permit the theft of the work of one's brain——"

"There was no theft," broke in the editor; "you were paid. I sent the cheque yesterday—at least, to Mrs. Cristopher Smith."

. "Ah!" exclaimed that lady, again directing her attention to the rival authoress. "I suppose you have been paid for it, and as Mrs. Cristopher Smith."

The red spots on Winnie's cheeks positively glowed. "Do you suppose I shall ever touch a penny of your miserable money?" she said, towering before the editor. "Although you offered that payment yourself—although you asked for the story. Tell her," she cried, brandishing the magazine in his face, "tell her you offered that particular sum yourself! Tell her you asked me for the story at the Authors' Dinner."

Surely, no London editor has ever been treated in this way before or since. It seems sufficient excuse for any conduct. Drawing out his chair, Hodson suddenly sat down, and enunciated with the clearness of desperation, "Damn!" immediately following the ejaculation by the emphatic statement, "If ever I go to another Authors' Dinner, I'll eat my boots!"

It was the wisest thing he had done throughout the interview. The two ladies looked at him, and their eyes began to twinkle; they turned and looked at each other, and their lips began to

twitch; and, finally, with a species of mutual convulsion, they gave way. Mrs. Smith dropped into a chair, and shook with laughter; while Miss Carmichael, on a corner of the writing-table, swayed backwards and forwards in equally uncontrollable mirth. A sense of humour had saved the situation.

Hodson began to breathe more freely, as he recognized there was now some probability that the occupants of the room would leave it alive.

"What," enquired Mrs. Smith, when she was able to articulate, "what has the Authors' Dinner to do with it?"

"That was where he asked me for the story," explained Miss Carmichael. "I sat next him."

"In Mrs. Cristopher Smith's place," interpolated the editor.

"Certainly not," said Winnie firmly. "I sat in the place which the plan indicated as mine."

"Then your plan must have been different," said the editor, beginning to assert himself. "It was Mrs. Cristopher Smith on mine."

"You don't happen to have kept it, I suppose?" Mrs. Smith enquired.

"I'm not sure it isn't somewhere here," Hodson replied, opening a drawer. "Yes—no—yes, here it is."

Mrs. Smith took it from him, and examined it.

"Where did you sit?" she enquired, addressing Hodson.

"At the table marked C.," he replied, "third from the door. There is the name of Mr. Brooke, whose guest I was, and here, plain enough, 'Mrs. Cristopher Smith.'"

"Yes," Mrs. Smith agreed, "that is so. And I believe I begin to see light. You were in your right place, but I did not go to the dinner, and you," turning to Winnie, "were at the wrong table."

Winnie rose to her feet.

" At the wrong table!" she said.

"Yes," rejoined Mrs. Smith. "You ought to have been at table E.—there is your name—and you must have gone to table C. instead, occupying the same relative position as that allotted to you at E. Obviously, you must have been in my place."

Winnie gazed in silence at the plan.

"And you thought she was me?" pursued Mrs. Cristopher Smith, with an absence of grammar unsuited to her literary position.

- "Yes," said Hodson, "and I asked for a short story."
- "I have never," Mrs. Smith observed, with some dignity, "written short stories."
- "But," Winnie suggested, "after that? My story had my name and address on it."
- "It was torn off," Hodson replied, and entered into a full explanation.
  - "And the proofs," Mrs. Smith said, "went to me, I suppose?"
- "Yes," Hodson assented. "Probably they are lying at your house now."
- "Well," said the lady, "it seems we have got to the bottom or it. I think," she continued amiably, very amiably, it may be felt, when the reviews are considered—"I think no one has been really to blame. Evidently it all hinged on Miss Carmichael seating herself at the wrong table."

Winnie sighed. "How are we to put ourselves right with the public?" she asked.

Mrs. Smith motioned Hodson out of the editorial chair, and seating herself therein, she took up pen and paper and wrote.

"How will that do?" she enquired after a few minutes, handing the paper to Hodson.

He took it and read:-

" SIR,---

"By an unfortunate error, for which neither I, the editor of the magazine, nor the author of the story can be held responsible, my friend, Miss Carmichael's brilliant tale, 'A Cotton Pocket-handkerchief,' in this month's issue of the Hyde Park Magazine, has been attributed to me. I only regret that, much as I should like to retain the credit of authorship, justice compels me to disclaim it; and I shall feel greatly obliged by your insertion of this in an early number of your paper.

"I am, Sir, yours faithfully,
"DOROTHEA SMITH."

"If you think that will do," said Mrs. Smith, "have it copied and sent round to the papers. The results will probably be instructive."

"Of course," said Winnie, addressing Hodson with a certain coldness, "you will pay me for the story according to my repu-

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tation, not according to Mrs. Cristopher Smith's. I was not aware——"

"My dear girl," interrupted Mrs. Smith—they had been near cutting each other's throats about fifteen minutes previously—"My dear girl, you will take every penny he offered. Why," addressing the editor, "you had an extra large issue on the strength of that story, I suppose?"

Hodson nodded.

- " And it's gone?"
- " Very nearly."
- "Then you had better get out another," said the author of 'Walter Thorp.' "That letter will sell it."

And it did. It also made Miss Carmichael's reputation, for the reviewers, having a difficulty in eating their own words, found it most convenient to recognise her, in her own proper person, as another brilliant star on the horizon. The Nagger, indeed, went beyond that, and stated it had had an internal conviction from the first that that story had never been conceived or executed by Mrs. Cristopher Smith, but by someone on a distinctly higher literary plane. The Bystander is at present the only weekly review which can comfortably take an impartial position with regard to Miss Carmichael's work.

Of all those involved in the affair Mrs. Cristopher Smith alone really deserved sympathy; she had been absolutely blameless, and yet somehow it was at her that everything unpleasant said on the occasion was levelled. Not that, after all, she was injured thereby. "Walter Thorp" has gone into another edition since; indeed, it may be, two.

And Hodson has no reason for regret. As editor, he made a successful bit of business out of it; and as mere man—well, I understand, despite his expressed determination to the contrary, it is probable he will attend the next dinner of the Society of Authors, and as the guest of Mrs. F. Hodson, nee Carmichael.

# A Surgeon's Wife.

By ALISON BUCKLER.

I.

CECILIA LUTTRELL came out into the sunshine from the roseframed background of twilit hall. All the warm sweet air was set quivering and ringing by a chorus of welcoming worship. She paused a moment, for the foolish little worshippers tumbled over her feet in idiotic gladness at seeing her, and stopped the road by way of hurrying her up. Two fox-terriers leaped wildly at her knees; a Skye writhed in rapture over her instep. retriever vented his delight as paradoxically, if less obstructively, after one loud bark of triumph, by setting off to tear round the outermost circle of the lawn, as if he had gone mad with joy too · great for bearing. A white Angora cat watched her with drowsy interest from a garden seat where she lay curled, a cushion of hot fur. A grey kitten bolted out recklessly to see the last of her; repented its self precipitation into a herd of yelping rivals, and scampered up the trellis of the porch to obtain a safer and more commanding view. A very old Yorkshire terrier shook himself out of the basket in which he was enjoying his sun-bath and crawled slowly towards her.

"Get off, Frisk and Nell," she cried, pushing the fox-terriers aside. She knelt down by the blind elder and stooped to kiss his warm, sparsely-fringed head. "Dear old Gyppie," she murmured tenderiy.

"Really, Cecil, you are too absurd!" cried a vibrant masculine voice. "I am not even a little dearer than your dog if you expect me to kiss lips that have been lavishing their sweetness on that mangy old beast."

"I don't expect anything of the sort," said Cecilia rising. She smiled, but there was a deeper colour on her cheeks beneath the roses which bloomed forth to greet her lover. The dogs heard their mistress being scolded with haughty surprise and defiance. Nell and the Skye proceeded at once to investigate the source of such audacity in the odour of the newcomer's boots. Frisk barked at him briefly but severely, and then darted off in pursuit

of a rabbit beyond the fence. The subsequent proceedings interested him no more. The retriever, after a pause of stern and searching inquiry, hurried back across the lawn and stationed himself on guard at Cecilia's side.

The intruder and rival was a dark, handsome man of thirty, with keen grey eyes, fine, strongly-marked profile; a well-cut, firmly-closed, rather thin mouth, and a square chin. In Cecilia's eyes he was the grandest and dearest of God's creatures; her king, her priest, the very soul of her; but she wished he would not despise her for being fond of her dogs. It hurt her that he should be jealous of them; that he should grudge them, not a share of her love, for that was all his, but another love which was altogether quite different; which had grown up with her life before he came into it and brought that new love which was the opening out of a whole new world, imperial, infinite, immortal. Could he not understand that nothing could take from the great love she gave to him? Yet though that strange fierce love of his frightened her, she could not but love it the more for its terrors, and though his jealousy pained her, she loved the pain.

He took her into his arms; he hurt her again by the strength of his embrace, and again she loved the pain. He knew he hurt her, for she always cried out, but he must express his passion so; he could not help it. He kissed her on her eyes, her brow, her cheeks, her ears, but he did not kiss her lips. He was the one man in this world strong enough to resist their sweetness. There was a passion in him stronger than love. She did not understand it, though she was nervously aware of its presence; that there was something missing from the completeness of her happiness. She feared he was too intensely devoted to science to love her as wholly as she loved him: too ambitious of fame to place her first in his life. She felt sadly her incapacity to fill his whole heart and existence as he filled hers: her unworthiness of his love, of a share in his splendid life. She supposed it must always be so; that man's love should be of his life a thing apart and woman's her whole existence. She was not clever like him. She could be of no use to him in the making of his fame. She could have no share in the deep things that lay beyond herself. She could give and give of pure deep love, but she would fain have given more than love and she could not. She thought his profession the highest and holiest in the world. She worshipped him as one who lived for the healing of the world's suffering. But she sickened and shuddered at details; at mention of operations; at the sight of a surgical case; at the danger he ran from infection.

There was nobody at that side of the house to see their meeting, to criticize and analyse; nobody except three angry, suspicious "lower animals," who being destitute of minds and rights could have no opinions worth considering. They fittingly forbore to protest farther, and tried their polite little best to tolerate, if not to accept as an acquisition to their party, the person whom their mistress delighted to honour.

These walked off together into the deep fragrant wood beyond the lawn.

"You did not meet me at the station," he said reproachfully.

"Mrs. Forbes called and stopped me. I told her I must meet the train, but, alas! the mention of it only seemed to suggest another topic to detain me. But you were late too, dearest?" quickly.

"I missed the first train. I heard of a house that was, as usual, sure to do, and I went to see it that I might bring a report to you. As usual, it won't do at all. It is in Greta Street; a very inconvenient house. We cannot possibly live in Greta Street; much too far from the hospital."

"Why, it isn't so far as Toward Lodge, and we had almost decided upon that. Greta Street—I don't remember any house there to let except the Greys', which is a very good house indeed."

"It is the Greys'. It is badly built. No cellars."

"Dear, why should you so insist upon cellars? I am sure a laboratory above ground would be far healthier, and daylight is far best for every sort of work."

"May not a doctor be supposed to judge best of a sanitary question?" he asked impatiently. "I think I shall decide on Toward Lodge. The only alternative is to build a house, and I cannot wait for that, Cecil."

"And I should so dislike a brand-new house without real trees and a nice garden, and the smell of mortar everywhere. But let us, wait, dear, to look a little farther. Toward Lodge gives me a creepy feeling. They say it was used by coiners, before Dr. Mordaunt took it, and that they built the high garden wall

and made the cellars. Certainly, the conveniences for keeping dogs are ideal."

He twitched his arm.

She clasped both her hands upon it, saying coaxingly:

"I do believe he is jealous of poor little mortals without souls. Gervaise, darling, however much they love me and I them, it is for such a little, little while. You and I have each other for all our lives and for evermore."

"How can you, a high churchwoman, waste your affection over things without souls?" he demanded sarcastically. "You believe that human babies belong to the devil before they are baptised, don't you?"

"They have their warm, loving little hearts, dear. Perhaps they have something more—St. Augustine thinks it possible—an immortal part as we have. Think what a true, faithful little friend Caro was," her lip quivered. "I always think I shall meet her again in heaven, and that she will leap up at the sight of me, dear thing. I feel as if she must know when I am at her grave, and that she stirs a little and opens her eyes sleepily, and puts out her pink tongue to lick my hand."

"I wonder you don't have her up to see how she is getting on," he said brutally, glancing at her with something like apprehension, not shame; as if he believed her almost capable of such folly. Perhaps he was only afraid of having gone too far.

She shrank from him at his words, turning sick and pale.

"Forgive me, darling," he cried, in an access of penitence. "Cecil, my own, my sweet! You know I love you all the more-for your tenderness for these dumb, dependent creatures; but it should be rational. You cannot love them. Love is for human-beings. These are infinitely lower—altogether different. Doesnot even your Bible tell you they were given to man, subjected to him, for his use? Don't women who fuss most over petswantonly help to destroy the most beautiful of all for their personal adornment?"

She was not listening. She still looked white and sick. He touched her and she shivered, yet his touch was very gentle. No one could be gentler with a suffering fellow-creature. His patients believed him to be incomparable for touch and voice. They might have been uneasy to see how pale he grew as he watched her. Such extreme sympathy in a doctor might be a

symptom of weakness. Or could he fear that she had blamed him for her pet's death? He had taken Caro from her to cure, he said. He wanted to watch her case carefully, and to isolate her lest she should develop rabies. He had not cured her. He had brought her back to Cecilia, coffined in a tin biscuit-box hermetically sealed, and buried her in Cecilia's presence in her sister's garden at Stormsley Hall. Cecilia never thought of blaming him. He had seemed as deeply concerned as she was at that little funeral.

"Mrs. Forbes rather vexed me," she said presently. "She says such unpleasant things."

"Of me in particular?"

Cecilia laughed a little forcedly.

"She has a very bad opinion of modern science. She disapproves of you highly, both on scientific and theological grounds."

"How cruel!—and my theology, too! I really don't know my own creed, except that human life is the most sacred thing in the world, and that the highest object a man can live for is to lessen the sum of human suffering."

This confession struck her unpleasantly. His emphasis was oddly unconvincing, for there was nothing he was wont to inveigh against more strenuously than cant. She did not speak.

"What is this last tit-bit of scandal about me?" he asked abruptly.

"She said you wrote to the papers in favour of vivisection," Cecilia replied falteringly, not laughing up into his eyes as usual, when reporting Mrs. Forbes' slanders. She spoke as with a great effort, and with averted eyes; she shrank a little farther from him; nothing of perceptible distance beyond the lightening of her soft shoulder's weight from his,

He laughed loudly and harshly.

"The old fool! She would have shrieked as loudly against anatomical demonstration a few decades ago."

"But, dear, you surely cannot approve—"

"Do I approve of cutting off a diseased limb, of giving a dear little child a dose of nasty physic, of catching a poor cod to steal his oil, of cooking and eating that cod and all other animals for the preservation of my own more important carcase? Cecil, you are a little goose—no, a little out of date dodo."

"But you wouldn't do it yourself, dearest?"

Gervaise sprang to his feet impatiently. He could do so without any restraint, for nearly an inch of empty air blew between his shoulder and hers.

"My dearest Cecilia!" he cried. "Do allow me to enjoy a holiday, the greenwood tree, the scent of the hawthorn and hyacinths, your own fair presence. Don't bring the sights and odours of the dissecting room into paradise. I may do many things out of the necessity of my calling that I would not choose as topics of conversation with a young lady in a sylvan retreat. For you, let me be only a man and your lover, not a surgeon. Faugh! would you have me come a-wooing reeking like a butcher?--forgive me, love; you make me forget myself. Believe me, Cecilia, I do nothing in my profession that is not a deed of mercy, but I do not feel inclined to describe or even allude to the necessities involved in such deeds. You yourself would insist upon their performance—you, who would turn faint at the sight of a cut finger, who could never bring yourself to see a tooth drawn. If everybody were like that, where would all the poor sick folk be? Don't ask me how I perform my operations or compound my powders. Let me forget such things for an hour, and remember only you."

He had raised his voice more than he knew. Frisk, returning all unwearied from the chase, heard and apparently misunderstood. A dog's instinct should be truer, for surely it could not be that Gervaise Bartram was threatening his beloved? Frisk judged, sentenced and executed all in a breath. He darted out of the underwood with an angry bark and snapped at Gervaise's leg.

The snap was really absurdly ineffectual. The trouser was thick, and the dog intended only to convey a slight punishment, a mere hint that somebody was about who could not allow Miss Luttrell to be insulted. But Gervaise flew into an access of rage and kicked Frisk fiercely.

The little terrier set up a dismal yell, and fled squirming and squeaking to Cecilia's lap. She did not speak, or even look up; she only cuddled and crooned over the quivering, indignant little thing, who from the cosy vantage of her soft arms shot glances of deadly hate, accompanied by low growls, at his enemy.

"You care nothing if I am bitten to the bone!" he exclaimed,

"and you pet that cur who has not got a tenth of his deserts. I don't pretend to have been worried to death," he continued aggressively, imagining to detect a scornful smile twitch her lips, "but I don't understand how you can care for me if you can fondle and fuss over an infernal little ill-tempered beast like that. It is enough to exasperate a saint."

"Rather an ill-tempered one, I fear." She could have forgiven the stronger adjectives as offending her dignity, but it was more difficult to forgive its application to her little dog.

"This is too much!" cried Gervaise. "Cecil, you know why I hate him and he hates me. We are jealous of each other; actually jealous as if we stood on a level, mental, moral and physical! He has little need to hate me, he need not grudge me the poor crumbs that fall from his table!"

"You are talking absolute nonsense, Gervaise," she said quietly.

"Prove that it is so!" he cried. "Prove that you believe a man is worth more than a beast. Choose between him and me!"

"That is absurd. There is no question of choice."

"Prove it, then!" he went on, his anger gathering fury while it excited the louder growling of the dog.

No one can help feeling annoyed at a dog's disapproval. There is a superstition or faith as to the unerring instinct—the high value of canine estimate.

"How can I prove it?" she asked wearily, slightly relaxing ther arms. The dog made a spring—she just caught him before the escaped.

"Kill the brute!" said Gervaise shortly.

"Kill him—for growling at you?"

"I have no doubt you would rather see me killed. You nearly let him fly at me again then. He is a savage beast. The law would not let him live."

She burst into tears. Frisk let off one more brief but incisive growl, and turned his attention to the soothing of his mistress.

"How can you be so cruel, Gervaise?" she sobbed.

He would have taken her into his arms in his passionate contrition, but he dared not approach the dog—a fact which did not serve to assuage his wrath.

"Choose between him and me," he repeated doggedly. "Kill him, or send me from you for ever."

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- " You cannot be in earnest!" she cried indignantly.
- "I am as earnest as death. Pray don't call me jealous of a dog. My reason is that I have proved how little you love me."
  - " I too have proved how little you love me!" she retorted.

And she walked slowly away down the path under the trees, carrying her fond, joyful burden.

"Cecilia, do you mean it?" he cried.

The anguish in his tone surprised her, but she walked steadily on—out of the wood, across the lawn and round to the stables, that Frisk's hurts might be attended to by experts.

Gervaise did not follow her; not for days—weeks. She did not announce her engagement to be broken off, for she was sure he must come back repentant, to own how foolish, how cruel, how wicked he had been. Presently she heard he had gone to Paris.

Then she realized the terrible thing that had happened, the shipwreck she had made of her life. Frisk was as well as ever, flying about the place after rabbits and cats. He had not been very seriously hurt, and it is alarming to be bitten anyhow by a dog, and Frisk's habit of growling at Gervaise was always most irritating. She almost hated Frisk for the havoc he had helped to make of her life. After all, what was a little dog compared with a man's love and her own happiness? And Gervaise had gone to Paris with his angry, broken heart, and she was left with her shattered life and her dogs.

She was obliged to let the world know that her wedding was put off, as they could not find a house. She had no relations to inquire and protest. Her invalid sister May was abroad for her health, and the uncle with whom she was staying during May's absence was too much wrapped up in his own ailments to notice her pale face. Indeed, he had not remembered that Cecilia was to have been married in June.

Mrs. Forbes, the vicar's wife, said many dark things. She surmised there had been a quarrel over the househunting, and shook her head over Dr. Bartram's unexpected prolongation of bachelor liberty.

"You were a fool to let him go to Paris," she said. "It is in them always to go to the devil when they get the opportunity. They begin it as medical students, and only put on a mock of respectability with a practice."

Had she sent him back to the devil, then? It was likely enough. He was a man with no religious faith to keep him straight once her influence was removed. Had he returned to wallow in mire? Selfish and ignorant as she was, helpless to make him greater, had she been strong enough to destroy him? It is so easy to destroy; a child—an idiot holds life and death in its hands. She knew nothing of the Salpétrière, else suspicion might have been shuddering horror never to be forgotten; not pitying remorse preparing welcome for the prodigal. She had wrecked her own life too, yet she had the dog for whose sake all such wrecking had been wrought.

Upon such agonised thoughts he broke in the dusk of a wet June day.

"You have come!" she cried joyously.

"Are you glad, Cecil? Did you miss me at all? You had the dogs—were they not enough to supply my place?"

She protested, and clung to him, and sobbed in a heaven of ecstacy, mingled with contrition.

"So we shall be married on the 30th. Is that time enough to furnish the house, and pack your frocks, and take a tender farewell of the dogs?"

"Of the dogs?" she echoed, dismayed. "Why, Gervaise, you know there is no end of room for them at Toward Lodge—as we must go there. I couldn't leave them here or with May. They will be useful. That house always looks lonely."

There was an outbreak of angry protest foreshadowed in his eyes, but he admitted: "They may be useful, certainly. Cecil, you must make a concession on your side. I won't have that brute which bit me. He must be killed."

"Oh, not killed!" she pleaded. "That would be so unnecessary. I will give him away."

"Let me take him away now," he said, with a curious gleam in his eyes.

"Oh! no. He wouldn't go with you, I am afraid."

The groom undertook to find a good home for him. She wept bitterly over the parting, her tears increased by the perplexed caresses they called forth. Poor little fellow! How little he knew who was betraying him into exile. But kis life would not be blighted. He would not go the devil. He had no soul to lose. He would find cats and rabbits to hunt, and beggars to

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bark at elsewhere. It was his own fault. He should not be so wicked as to dislike and tease Gervaise. But he was such a dear, loving, faithful little thing. Not so loving as Gervaise. Can a love that is not intelligent be compared with that of a great wise man? Can a dog's heart, a dog's life, be weighed against a man's?

#### II.

"IT is so hard that she must die," sobbed Cecilia.

She was walking with her husband from the London hotel where May was staying. May had returned none the better for her year's travel, and her husband had telegraphed to Gervaise to bring Cecilia. He also wanted Dr. Bartram's opinion on May's case. The foreign doctors had been stupider than the English. None of them seemed to know what was the matter with May. He declared opinions differed—they agreed only in giving no hope.

Dr. Bartram gave an opinion, agreeing with the minority—agreeing with all in that he too had no hope. May must agonise through weeks, perhaps months more, until death released her. All remedies tried were only groping in the dark. It was a very uncommon case, yet not, alas! unique. Experience was deficient as to its right treatment. Even now, could that treatment be discovered she might be saved, but that was impossible. If he could have watched the case from the beginning—but that, too, had been impossible, for the malady only declared itself when well advanced.

"It could not be observed from the outside," he added in a low voice, "and an operation would be fatal. It is a case in fact only to be cured from knowledge acquired by vivisection."

Cecilia heard, though he did not know it. She was coming from May's bedside into the adjoining room, where the brothers-in-law were discussing the matter. She hardly noticed. She could only think of May's bodily anguish—of the mental anguish of her husband—the loss to the three little babies she must leave.

Cecilia would fain have stayed with May, but Gervaise would not hear of it. She could do May no good, and she was ailing herself. And he would not be left alone.

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She could almost have laughed at the last objection. It seemed to her that he could hardly miss her if she were to leave him for a year—for ever. He was absorbed in his work. When he was not out visiting patients he was in his underground laboratory. She hated that laboratory as some wives hate clubs. She was depressed and nervous. She believed he had ceased to love her, and that his desire for her presence was mere jealous tyranny. He told her she was out of sorts, and prescribed medicine and exercise.

"It is the house," she told herself. "It is like a grave."

It was a dismal place, a mile out of the town where Gervaise's hospital was, surrounded by dark trees and unusually high walls. Its last tenant had kept quite a menagerie of dogs and other animals, and their empty boxes and kennels saddened her like empty cradles. For she had been obliged to give up her own dogs. Toward Lodge did not agree with their temper. The three snarled and growled at Gervaise as persistently as if they blamed him for their companion's loss. Then Nell disappeared. Gervaise was kind and sympathetic, and advertised the loss in the local papers, offering an unusually handsome reward—all in vain.

"It is so dreadful to think of the sort of place she may have been taken to by the thieves," mourned Cecilia. "If I knew she were dead—shot by a keeper—I should be almost happy."

Then the retriever took to howling all night, resenting the restraint upon his freedom considered necessary after Nell's loss, and the Skye ate an important paper of Dr. Bartram's. Cecilia, worn out by opposition, consented to banish the two dogs to her uncle's house, sixty miles off, in Cumberland. Stormesley, May's house, was shut up. She escorted the exiles herself by train with many tears and returned the same day. Early the following morning she suddenly started broad awake.

"Gervaise," she cried, "I hear Bob at the door. Do go to let him in."

It was absurd. The sound was so faint, the mere ghost of a bark, and Bob's voice was sonorous. Gervaise was much annoyed, but went to the front door to pacify her. Cecilia listened intently. She was positive she heard the bark again; just such a remnant of a bark as might remain after a sixty miles' run. Gervaise was quite a quarter of an hour absent. He had

been very kind; had hunted everywhere, but there was no dog. Cecilia had been dreaming.

Next night she thought she heard Floss, the Skye. This dream took such hold of her that she got out of bed, drew aside the blind, and believed she saw in the moonlight the little familiar grey figure, writhing in faint joy at the sight of her, and trying to assert its identity by feeble whines. She attempted to slip out of the room unheard, but Gervaise awoke, and asked angrily what she was doing.

"Get into bed this minute," he commanded. "I'll see after the—beast."

She obeyed trembling, and waited. How would he vent his wrath upon the untimely little visitant? She shivered and sobbed while she listened. She would not stop her ears.

He returned after what seemed like hours of suspense.

"There is no dog at all," he stated sullenly. "You are haunted by dogs."

"I saw her. She has run away."

"You didn't see her. You were half asleep. You imagined it. Pray keep your dreams in hand for the future. They are becoming tiresome."

"She will come back in the morning," thought Cecilia. But she never came. She had then been a dream too.

She dared not go back to Cumberland to see the dogs, but she wrote to her uncle to enquire after them. He was some time in replying, and then he forgot to mention the dogs. His own gout was more interesting. Then she wrote to the coachman, who answered that the dogs were well. She was obliged to be satisfied with this, until one day when she accidentally met an old servant of her uncle's, out of place.

"Oh, ma'am, didn't you know? They both ran away directly. The master made Thompson promise not to tell you. We thought they must have run back here."

It was about then that Cecilia began to look and feel ill. She accounted for it to herself by fretting after the dogs and the influence of the dismal house. She never mentioned her discovery to her husband. She would not even in her inmost heart suspect him of having killed the dogs. He had probably driven them away, and hatred of him had annihilated their love for her, and they had never come back. Or perhaps she had

seen their ghosts only; perhaps she was haunted by dogs as her husband hideously suggested. It seemed the more likely when a day or two after she was positive she heard Bob whining in the distance, as if in intense pain; very faint and far away, like a ghost or a dream-dog, though she had not been sleeping, but adding up her account books well on in the forenoon. But neither he nor Floss ever showed themselves again. Then May came home hopelessly ill, and there was no time to mourn for dogs. May was her twin, her second self. She had nearly broken her heart over May's marriage. May would have done anything to comfort Cecilia. She even offered to give up Aubrey Fiennes. Cecilia would not hear of this sacrifice. She gloried in loving heroically, not selfishly, and she went to live with the young couple at Stormesley Hall. Then Gervaise Bartram came from the neighbouring town, and May fell back into a second place.

"Oh! Gervaise, if I could but do something for May!" she repeated as they walked through the dark park to their own hotel.

"There is nothing to be done," he said moodily, "even if you were strong enough to do it. She has all the nursing she wants. You will want nursing yourself if you wear yourself out."

"Myself! When I would lay down my life for her!"

"That wouldn't be of much use to her. The mischief is, we cannot find out what would be of use. If we could, she might be saved. She could have been saved if it had not gone on too long, but before it was suspected it had taken hold."

"She never complained. She was so unselfish."

"If she had been less unselfish according to her own idea and yours, she would have been spared to her husband and children for many years."

"Our mother died just the same way."

"You never told me that before, Cecilia," said Gervaise, with startled energy.

"I did not think of it. It was not consumption."

" May hasn't consumption."

"We thought May's illness was only depression from influenza until she came from Cairo."

They were passing through the blaze of gaslight at Hyde Park Corner. He glanced suddenly and fearfully at Cecilia. Pshaw!

She was tired and distressed. But she was May's twin sister, and she looked exactly as May had looked last year at this time, and Cecilia had never had influenza.

A week later they were at home. May was just the same, but Cecilia looked ill enough to justify careful examination. Gervaise had been watching her carefully since that moment of ghastly suspicion at Hyde Park Corner, and knew what to look for. He found no expected symptom. Cecilia was nervous, off colour, depressed, but there was nothing wrong organically as far as he could discover. She had not then inherited her sister's fatal malady. He told her there was nothing ailed her but fancifulness. Her liver might be a little out of order. She did not in the least believe him. She thought he was indifferent and sceptical about her illness. He ordered her to keep herself cheerful and eat more and not give way to morbid imagination. Then science swallowed him up again.

She was very lonely, very sad, very restless. She wandered all over the house and garden, but rarely went beyond. One dreary January evening, sitting alone in her drawing-room Gervaise being busy in his laboratory, on some work of great importance, she thought she heard a dog's wail of anguish.

She started to her feet. Like the father of the prodigal, she was ever expectant of her lost pets' return. She listened—she could not make out from which side of the house the howl had sounded. She heard it again. It was very strange. It seemed to sound from under her feet.

A cold perspiration broke over her. A dog's howl meant death. Was May dying?

She hurried out of the room. She could not bear to be alone. For the first time in her life, she went to find her husband in the laboratory. She went softly down the dark cellar stairs. The servants were in their own quarters at the other side of the house. She was terrified of the darkness, the silence; only more terrified of the haunted solitude from which she was escaping.

At the foot of the stairs she slipped. She heard the howl again. Why, it must be a strange dog shut into the back cellar which was used only for lumber and had egress to the yard by a small barred but unglazed window. She listened; all was silent. She dared not go alone into that dark, mouse-haunted, spider-hung den. She turned the handle of the laboratory door

It was locked. Gervaise shouted, "Who the devil's there?" and there was a strong smell of anæsthetics.

"Only I, dear," said Cecilia timidly. "I am frightened. Do come upstairs."

"Good God, Cecilia! What do you want?" he cried. "Go' away, I am busy. You can't come here."

She turned away, most of all frightened at his angry voice. Then she heard the dog moan again. The back cellar door was close to her hand, at right angles with the laboratory-door. She pushed it open a little way. It was a very rusty, rickety door, and stuck. "Come along," she whispered softly. "Poor little fellow. Good dog. Come along."

No imprisoned dog came forth. It must be too badly hurt to move. She gathered her skirts round her waist and stepped stealthily into the dark cellar. It looked an eerie place. She was terrified of mice and spiders; she suspected rats and black-beetles; but she could not let a little dog suffer unattended. The cellar was not perfectly dark after all. It was lighted, not from the yard, but from the window in the wall which divided it from the laboratory, where Gervaise had electric lights. She could see no dog, and none came at her low call. Then, fainter but nearer, she heard the moan again. It seemed to come from the wall.

Why, the dog was in the laboratory. Gervaise must have found it outside and brought it in to cure. As a doctor, he probably had seen a "case" where, had the dog been well, he would have seen only a cur. She would peep through the window.

Then a shriek rang through the house, and there was a crash—a man's loud shout of angry consternation—a hurrying of frightened servants to the top of the cellar stairs.

Dr. Bartram appeared, carrying his wife. "She is not much hurt," he explained. "She fell and knocked her head on one of the barrels in the back cellar and fainted. She came to fetch me and insisted on going in there to seek something."

"But the blood, sir!"

"What blood?" He looked at his unconscious wife. Her white dress was stained with blood. Then he looked at his hands. They were drenched in it. "She has grazed herself," he said shortly. "It is nothing serious. I will attend to her. No one need come at present."

He carried her to her bed and laid her there; then went to his own room to wash his hands. The housemaid was astonished afterwards that so much blood should come from a graze.

He watched alone beside Cecilia until she came to herself. She recognized him with a cry of horror, and hid her face away from him. He left her for the night; he had no further fears; and there was no wound nor graze to dress.

He did not expect to see her in the morning, but he had his plan laid. He would tell her she had dreamt it—or walked downstairs in her sleep, and suffered from an illusion. To his surprise she came to him, pale and stern, looking like a ghost, as he was finishing his breakfast.

"I wish to tell you that I can live in this house no longer," she said steadily.

He tried to carry it off with a laugh. "I am afraid we cannot remove at a day's notice," he said. "It would be awkward for my patients."

"I did not speak of you. I shall never live with you again. You monster!" She looked very determined and perfectly sensible. Worse—she looked hate and vengeance at him. She meant to betray him. She must be soothed and humoured. So long as she kept his secret, no great harm was done. She was sure to have found it out sooner or later; sure to be shocked and sure to come round in time to a common-sense view of the case.

"My own sweet, tender-hearted darling," he said, trying to put his arm round her, though she flung it off with loathing. "Don't be unreasonable. You would have been fifty times more horrified had you peeped into a dissecting-room or even a butcher's killing shop, and yet you know such things must be, for the good of us all. I swear to you that what you saw last night was a mere accident. I haven't had one for years. It is always completely painless. I made a mistake in the quantity of the anæsthetic."

She turned whiter and staggered to a seat. He went on gently: "Won't you understand that such things must be for the good of the human race? Would you prefer to see one you love die in mortal agony, rather than learn—so—to save him? Why, Cecilia, it is by such an operation alone that May could be saved—that we could find out the secret of her illness and its cure."

"Were you seeking for that last night?"

"No. Unfortunately, that could only be sought in a living human subject and would make one liable to a heavier penalty than I have risked yet. The law would call it murder."

"Oh! if I could only help you to find a cure for May, you might cut me into a thousand pieces at once!" she cried passionately.

He laughed. "You would hardly be ready to give your life for May in that way," he said. Then a strange gleam flashed out of his eyes and the blood rushed to his face for a moment and left it deadly pale. He went out hastily.

Gerilia lay back wearily in her chair. Oh! if she could but die instead of May. Life for her held nothing but horror. Gervaise had ceased to love her. Once his fitful passion had blazed out, satiated by possession, he had returned to his first and only love—science, absorbed as wholly by that gruesome mistress as other men are by drink or gambling. Now the dreary misery of knowing herself unloved gave place to terror of her husband. How hard that May should die—May, who was so happy, who had so much to leave. Why had this dread disease struck her, and not Cecilia who longed for death?

All at once a new resolve took possession of her. She would insist upon Gervaise telling her the truth.

Gervaise returned presently. He was startled at the change in her face. The horror had gone out of it, and a strange calm possessed it—a cold, awful calm like death.

"Gervaise, what is the matter with me?" she asked quietly. He was silent. "I know," she went on. "It is the same illness as May's." He answered only by his silence. "I am at an early stage though," she went on in a curious toneless voice. "I can be operated on."

"An operation would certainly, or almost certainly, be fatal, supposing you were so diseased."

"You once said it would be useful—at this early stage."

" Useful to others, but death to the person experimented upon."

"Useful to May?" She looked eagerly into his face. He turned abruptly from her: not to hide his grief—to hide his grappling with temptation. Was it a devil who murmured sweetly behind him, or an angel?

"My life is quite useless: my death might save a useful life. I must die soon: I have only a few months to give. Surely, I have a right to give them? A soldier has a right to give his life

for his country. A man has the right at times to will whether his wife must live or die. It can be managed quite easily. I have thought it all out. Dr. Ellis, who was here yesterday, remarked how ill I looked. Others know it too. You could say I died naturally, or under an operation, and give the certificate yourself. Gervaise, does it hurt much? I mean, if you should forget to give the right quantity of anæsthetic?"

The lust of knowledge possessed him, the lust of fame. If he should make this discovery, he would be esteemed the greatest of living surgeons, and his wife might be doomed already. Custom had made him absolutely reckless. He lied to her. He said:

"It might save May-but---"

"It will save May!" she whispered to herself, her white worn face all shining with love. His eyes too glowed, but he had had long practice in managing his features, and when he turned them to her they were only grave and sympathetic.

He asked Dr. Ellis to come in that afternoon and look at his wife. He described her complaint, not altogether accurately, and said she insisted upon an operation, and that only he should perform it. She was nervous and hysterical, had been for some time full of strange illusions, and Dr. Bartram feared for her mind if she were not humoured; still, he would be obliged if Dr. Ellis would remain within reach.

Cecilia confirmed it all; even confirmed unconsciously the unhinged state of her mind, Dr. Ellis thought, as he observed her strange rapt eyes. "Poor thing!" he thought. "She has such exalted confidence in her clever husband. It ought to pull her through . . . but I fear. . . ."

A telegram was brought in. Cecilia had fortunately retired, with that strange bright light on her face, like a halo round her head . . . May was dead.

"No need to tell her," thought Gervaise. Would the sacrifice be useless that meant fame to him?

Yet the world heard, through Dr. Ellis, that the shock of the news had killed her: left her too feeble to rally from the operation. Gervaise declared he had not told her, but no doubt she had guessed . . . and he dared not postpone the operation, as her one small chance was to save another day's delay.

# Marie Dorval,

15

THE debt which the dramatists of Romanticism owe to Marie Dorval is not yet fully paid, although she has been called the Providence of poets.

It is true that Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas and Alfred de Vigny cordially acknowledged their indebtedness, and never ceased to proclaim that she was the life and soul of their creations: Marion Delorme — Adèle d'Hervey — Kitty Bell would hardly have survived so long unless they had been seen as creatures of flesh and blood whose looks and tones have been handed down as precious memories from generation to generation. "They lived for us a real life," said Gautier; "we believed in their love—their tears—their despair. No personal grief ever affected us so much or so wrung our hearts and reddened our eyes! and if we survived their deaths one night, it was only in the hope of seeing them again the next, more sad, more plaintive, more passionate and more charming."

But yet how seldom are they thought of now!

Memoirs, essays, criticisms, swarm with reference to unforgotten dramatists, but of their interpreters we hear no more.

Even our own grand actors and actresses leave in this overcrowded world the merest memory of a name behind them, although they are one and all, so far from being equalled or surpassed.

It was in 1830—in the heat of the battle between the old school and the new, that Marie Dorval appeared as heroine par excellence of the romantic drama, ably seconded at first by Frederick Lemaître and then by Bocage. To see each actor at the very best, one must see them together; the talents completed one another—the individuality of both being, none the less, their strongest characteristic.

The gifts of Marie Dorval were essentially her own. She owed nothing to tradition; her manner was perfectly modern with all the high colouring enthusiasms—mistakes—of the time; and she was always herself, without affectation, with no theatrical make-up. She could not be said to owe her success

to fine eyes or "the talent of being pretty." It was impossible to be more natural, womanly, interesting. In the simplest sentences she won the whole sympathy of her audience, who almost forgot that they were looking at a stage play, and could have fancied that they saw before them a woman who in her anguish or remorse believed herself to be alone.

The art it takes so long to learn seemed hers by inspiration; she had no occasion to study her exits and entrances, or to rehearse her attitudes; there was no calculation, no premeditated effects: she was simply the creatures she personated, acting exactly as they would have acted in real life.

It was for this reason, this spontaneous freedom, that she failed in classic tragedy. She could not be brought to stand still at a certain spot, to count her steps, or fall into the prescribed tone, the regulated gesture; a set expression was impossible to her, and it was doubtless to her unconquerable naturalness that she owed her greatest charm:

The first of her triumphs was in the part of Amélie in Trente Ans de la Vie d'un Joueur, by Victor Ducange. It was a difficult one; for the gambler's wife—a sad and faded woman who was to enlist sympathy and rivet attention—owed nothing to outward attractions; she was broken under the weight of long years of suffering and humiliation, but she came before an audience of rare critics, ready to understand every subtle shade, every fine distinction, every manifestation of genius.

Years after Marie Dorval's death, Paul Foucher reviewed the same drama after seeing it performed by different actors, and wrote: "Of course I was aware that no other actress could give us back the heartrending voice, the truthfulness—the simple grandeur of Marie Dorval."

It was in direct contrast to the poverty-stricken wife and mother, that she appeared as Adèle d'Hervey in Dumas' play of *Antony* at the Porte St. Martin; and when the curtain rose on Madame Dorval in the full dress of a woman of fashion, she was hardly recognised.

We have but a feeble idea nowadays of what was then meant by one of those never-to-be-forgotten first representations; it was a tumult, an effervescence hardly to be realised! The young men of the time lived only for art; never had mental power been more active, more appreciated, more desired. There was

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an intense ardour in the pursuit of literature—the masters of poetry and fiction were almost idolised; all the world was young, intelligent, enthusiastic. It was the sap of a new life, and the contrast between the culture, good taste and exaltation of the beginning of the century, can scarcely be thought in favour of the end.

On this particular evening, the theatre seemed charged with electricity: as the piece proceeded the crowd burst into acclamations, tears and audible sobs.

Bocage was the real Antony. Marie Dorval the real Adèle; yet there appeared at first some doubt amongst the colder critics as to the power of sustained interest in so simple a plot.

Dumas, who was present (not in his usual green frock-coat, as Gautier characteristically describes, but all in black, with an enormous bouquet), relates that during the first act, there was no applause; the success of the second belonged entirely to Bocage—handsome, sombre, lover par excellence—but in the third, Marie Dorval won all hearts—her beauty, her feminine vacillation between right and wrong, her tenderness, her terror, were all rendered with a justice and delicacy which left no doubt as to the ultimate issue.

In Marion Delorme Madame Dorval accentuated all the qualities which placed her in the foremost rank of eminent artists—grace, pathetic feeling, above all, directness and naturalness. The piece was composed under the Restoration, but was interdicted by the Bourbon censure, nor was it till after the July revolution that it was given at the Porte St. Martin. Jules Janin proclaimed it the best of Hugo's plays. The plot is more simple, the characters more true to life. We have before us average human beings, and thereby the author fulfils the conditions he has himself laid down as the essence of Romanticism.

Bocage was the ideal jeune premier romantique—in most of his parts he had the same characteristics—a sort of Byronic fatality pursuing him under every variety of circumstances—always a victim, always an unhappy lover, a hero in disguise. Didier was one of his best creations; serious, austere, full of belief in others, which is the sure sign of individual worth; he loves and therefore trusts; it cannot enter his mind that the woman he has chosen is anything but upright and virtuous, but he is grossly deceived, and when his eyes are opened, is impla-

cable. Even in his last moments, forgiveness is out of the question. It was the author's intention so to end the play, but this appeared to Madame Dorval too painful; she strenuously opposed it, whilst Hugo contended that the tragedy demanded such a climax, but Merimée having also remonstrated, he was obliged to alter the last scene to one of repentance and pardon, which cost the public a great many tears. What was thought of Marie Dorval in Marion Delorme may be read in the words of Jules Janin.

"Thoroughly to understand Madame Dorval one must have seen a pretty little person from the Théâtre Français in this rôle; the poor girl was terrified—lost in the mazes of that poetic frenzy; she had no idea how to render those cries, tears, and sobs. It is only Marie Dorval who can give life to such incomparable compositions. She alone is human and natural in her abandonment—she alone remains pale, worn, exhausted, for it is the misfortune of our present actresses, even the most animated, that they are delivered over to the pitiless Bandit who attacks the life and talent of woman, the terrible traitor, Embonpoint."

Deeply tragic as she could be when the occasion demanded. the character she made her own, and which in her lifetime, no other actress dared attempt, was that of Kitty Bell, in Alfred de Vigny's Chatterton. Timid, unassuming, slightly puritanical, she fulfilled the author's conception in a manner which revealed new power at every turn, requiring all the tact and delicacy of the perfect artist. Devoted wife and mother, but falling by almost imperceptible degrees into passionate love, through the working of pure compassion, she even satisfied De Vigny himself, whose ideal was so high, and whose taste was refined even to effeminacy. Woman's whole variable and impulsive nature, tender and faithful, but carried away beyond reason by pity and sympathy, was portrayed with exquisite realism: no classic formula could ever have imbued an actress with such tones of grief and tenderness as nature taught to Marie Dorval, so true is it that nature only is antique and the oldest art a mushroom.

De Vigny had put into the character of Chatterton all his own inordinate melancholy, affirming that the soul of wisdom was a sort of peaceable despair. It was best, he said, to destroy at first all hope in the heart of man. His own position placed him above pecuniary cares, but with a leaning towards unreality

which characterised him, he indulged the strongest, perhaps the only unaffected feeling he possessed, sympathy for poverty-stricken genius: never had luckless and despairing poets a more pathetic advocate.

The mania of the day for suicide doubtless contributed to the immense success of *Chatterton*. Versifiers who had to write in order to live, would rather vanish than descend to prose—death had become popular; it was the seal to be set on misprized genius—the last resource of elevated minds.

A story is told of Alfred de Musset, that when a splendid view over the Seine to the sea was pointed out to him, he exclaimed: "Ah! what a lovely spot in which to kill oneself!"

Great excitement and some trepidation, even amongst her most ardent admirers, followed the announcement that Marie Dorval was to appear in Victor Hugo's play of Angelo at the Theatre Français side by side with Mademoiselle Mars. Mademoiselle Mars already in possession of unexampled renown. Mademoiselle Mars, incomparable in grandeur, in polished calm, in every expression of sublime and delicate feeling, who not only was the interpreter of all that was most imposing in classic tragedy, but who had dared to take up the cause of the new school and to become the advocate of its audacities, who had advanced with the times and assured the progress of Romanticism. It was felt to be a duel à Poutrance.

The theatre was crowded with artists and literary men full of wonder and curiosity; moreover, it was whispered that a strange mistake had been made; that each actress was undertaking the rôle least adapted to her talent; that it would be next to impossible for Mademoiselle Mars to personate the bold, unscrupulous woman of the people, the lawless Tisbe, and more than doubtful if Marie Dorval could refrain from giving too much colour to the fair patrician Caterina.

These doubts and speculations, which could not fail to reach them, acted rather as a stimulus than a discouragement on the two actresses, each fully aware of the other's strength and confident in her own; nor were the two parts ever better played.

In spite, however, of these important triumphs, Marie Dorval could find no abiding place in the *Theatre Français*; she took refuge in the Gymnase, and the best judges of the day were furious. "And you let her go," cried Jules Janin to Frederick

Souliè in a paroxysm of reproach, "you gave her up—to what? to a little coquettish bonbonnière of a playhouse, devoted to the trumpery imbroglios of the Chaussée d'Antin! You imagine that this admirable creature could wear laces without tearing them into bits, and braid her hair smoothly without pulling it out by handfuls?"

But in this the critic was mistaken, for the Marion Delorme, the Adèle, the Caterina of the finest stage in the world, could act light comedy in a charming manner, and like her colleague Frederick Lemaître, could at will be either débonnaire or terrible. Her grace and gaiety delighted as much as it surprised the audiences who had hitherto only seen her in the character of a victim, and who had never suspected her of any comic vein. But this, too, was perfectly natural, for off the stage no human being was ever more joyous. Her light-heartedness, her love of amusement, her drollery and frank pleasure in any sort of frolic, would have stupefied those who, only seeing the outside of theatrical matters, were under the impression that tragedians went about with sombre airs, long faces, and a dagger up the sleeve. Nevertheless, the fame of the Gymnase was too narrow for her and by Victor Hugo's instrumentality, she won her laurels once more at the Thélitre Français in the rôle enchante of Dôna Sol.

Once again a comparison between the two greatest artists of the day became inevitable. Hernani's bride had hitherto been the uncontested property of Mademoiselle Mars, and warm discussions arose as to their individual fitness for the character.

The merit of being young was hardly allowed to weigh in favour of Marie Dorval, such was the loyal recognition felt on all sides for her rival's long and brilliant career so soon to close; but setting aside the question of age each had her enthusiastic adherents

The real conflict was between the old style and the new, between the calm, the reticence, the correctness of the first, and the naturalness of the second; a naturalness which might almost be called inspiration. It was this prodigality of life, this strain on every nerve, which killed Marie Dorval at the zenith of her power. The flame was too fierce and burnt itself out. She had risen with Lamartine, Hugo, Dumas, Georges Sand, De Musset, Lemaitre, and disappeared too soon, not the least luminous star of that radiant galaxy.

CECILIA E. MEETKERKE.

## A Matural Solution.

#### PART I.-THE MYSTERY.

#### CHAPTER I.

IT was a very tempting offer. The question was—should I accept it?

Some of my children were recovering from an attack of scarlet fever and needed change of air.

I had a strong objection to their contaminating, and possibly spreading the infection in, seaside lodgings; but a house situated in the heart of the country, as was the one offered me, where my family could remain until all risk of infection was past, seemed the very thing, and not to be lightly refused.

I myself also required the quiet and isolation such a habitation would ensure me, while writing the bulk of a book of which I had completed only the opening chapters, and which was timed to appear in the following season. I therefore felt that I could not do better than close with the offer of a house-agent at Sherriton to let me the aforesaid furnished house for a twelvemonth at a ridiculously low rental. The agent accounted for this latter fact by saying that the rent was not so much an object with the proprietor as the keeping of the house occupied. This was true enough, as I afterwards found, to my great disgust.

I had not, of course, decided to take the house without seeing it; and what I had seen being eminently satisfactory, we migrated to Sherriton, leaving our house at Kensington to be disinfected and otherwise renovated.

The Hermitage, as our new abode was called, was situated in the wildest part of the wilds of Middlesex, well within twenty miles of the Metropolis, and about two from the little town of Sherriton. It was built upon, or near, the supposed site of a hermit's cave, which, from being either filled up with earth or choked with plant growth, was no longer in evidence, if indeed it ever existed.

Being half Tudor, half Elizabethan in style, the "Hermitage" was rambling, nooky and picturesque, with two straggling wings at right angles to the body of the house, the fourth side of the

court thus formed being bounded by a low wall, surmounted by tall iron railings and heavy iron gates. The centre of the court was occupied by an immense circular bed of rhododendrons and other ornamental shrubs.

The left wing as you faced the house consisted of a billiard-room below, with three rooms built over. Of these—bedroom, dressing-room and study—my wife and I took possession, their isolation from the rest of the house favouring the prosecution of my work. The other wing was lower, being composed of stabling, unpierced by windows on the house side and overgrown, as was the whole building, with flowering creepers. A covered gateway in the centre of these stables led into the stable-yard, and over the roof of this gateway was a small clock-tower with a dial facing each way. I determined to use the clock if not the stables, and made a mental memo. to instruct the local clock-maker to regulate it—the hands standing at 12 o'clock, though the actual hour was 5 p.m. Greenwich time.

When I have added that the "Hermitage" had been used as the dower house of a noble family, and had survived the ruin and final disappearance of the ancestral mansion of which it had been but an appanage, I shall have said all that is necessary in the way of description.

On the night of our arrival we had dined with what comfort we could achieve in the confusion and strangeness of our new surroundings, and I had retired to the study, leaving my wife surrounded by some of the maids, the governess, and even my little type-writing secretary, whom she had pressed into the service, all occupied in the bedroom in the wing, in evoking order out of chaos, in unpacking and arranging matters for the night.

With a lofty sense of "aloofness" from this feminine tempest in a tea-cup, I settled down to my writing, and after an hour or so had thoroughly warmed to my work and had become wholly absorbed in it. I was approaching the end of a chapter, rapt in the interest of my own creations and totally oblivious of all else, when, quite unaccountably, my mind began to wander—I began actually to lose the thread of my subject; my pen stopped, and my eyes were drawn to my watch lying on the table beside me. The hands pointed to twelve, and simultaneously a clock began striking in the court-yard.

"Dear me," thought I, "the clock must have been repaired

this evening," and yet I had noticed just before dark that the hands still pointed to twelve.

I looked towards the open window, for it was a warm evening in April, and noticed with surprise that the white curtains were violently agitated, rather than blown about in an ordinary way by an ordinary breeze—there being neither sound nor sign that the wind had risen. The sight was so queer, that I sat gazing at the quivering draperies as if fascinated. I was recalled to myself, however, by the hasty opening of doors and the quick pattering of footsteps over the matting in the passage outside. Then my door was thrown open and my wife, deathly pale, followed by her domestic satellites, equally pallid, rushed in crying:

"Oh, my dear Wilfrid, how can you sit calmly listening to those awful cries, and not try to do something to help?"

"But, my dear," I answered, bewildered, "I hear no cries. What can you mean?"

"You have only to listen," she replied, holding up a warning finger and pausing.

There was dead silence—neither sound nor movement, except that of the waving, or rather now feebly wriggling, curtains.

The women all stood transfixed as though frozen with horror.

"They have made an end of her, the poor creature is no doubt dead," at length gasped the governess.

"I wish I knew what you are all driving at," said I in despair. "What poor creature is 'ended and dead'?"

"The poor soul who has been crying out for help in the most agonising tones," returned my wife. "You must have been asleep, Wilfrid, or you must inevitably have heard the cries. But, pray arouse Roberts and send him out with a lantern to reconnoitre."

"All right," said I, "but I will first get the pistols which I left in my portmanteau."

"Wait, however, for Roberts," entreated my wife, following me into the bedroom. "You must not——"but here her words were interrupted, nay, almost drowned, in the fearful cries for help borne on a strong current of air from the direction of the stable-yard, and which seemed literally to fill the room. The two dogs we had brought with us dragged frantically at their chains and yelped and whined piteously.

"Oh, mistress, mistress!" came in a girl's voice through the darkness. "Pray help me!"

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window. "Who and where are you?"

"I am here in the stable-yard—I am hurt—I am being strangled." And, with a prolonged shriek, the voice died down in a suffocated gurgle, as though the wretched owner were being indeed asphyxiated.

I could contain myself no longer, but clearing the stairs almost at a bound, and taking a stout cudgel from the rack in the hall, I, with Roberts, who had procured a lantern, made for the stablevard.

Everything appeared quiet. The night was still, without a suggestion of wind. The polished foliage of the shrubs glittered in the moonlight, but were not stirred. The gates locked and barred, as Roberts had left them hours before. We entered the stable-yard and threw the light of our lantern into the lurking shadows. Nothing unusual was to be seen. We searched the premises, but found no trace of intruders; indeed the outer gates giving on a back road were fastened, and the bolts so rusted that they were withdrawn with the greatest difficulty.

While tugging at the bolts, a voice hailed us from outside the gates, enquiring if we wanted assistance.

The voice was the voice of the inevitably-too-late policeman.

"It is a pity you were not here a little sooner," I replied, "when you might possibly have prevented a crime which I believe has just been committed hereabouts, though I can find no trace of the perpetrators."

"I shouldn't have been here now," retorted the constable coolly, "only I heard your stable-clock strike. Then I knew you had come, for that clock don't never strike unless there's somebody living in the house, and then only at twelve at night."

Amazed at the man's coolness, and quite forgetting that I myself had at first been equally oblivious, I demanded:

"And why did you not come to the assistance of the poor creature whose cries, being at no great distance, you must have heard."

"Nobody don't hear no sounds except the clock striking, but the people in the house," said the man, imperturbably, "and it have had five tenants in three years."

"That is pretty well for a furnished house," I said. "I myself intended to stay only a twelvemonth."

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"Ah, but the other tenants only stayed a week each," said the policeman dryly. "And that I fancy, sir, will be about your term. It ain't no use searching, sir, you won't find nothing," and with that the man moved off, as if afraid of being invited to enter the house.

Here was a state of things. We could not possibly return to our home, and suitable lodgings would be still to seek. We must perforce remain at the Hermitage for several days at least.

It might be suggested that by closing up the "haunted" room, we might have occupied the remainder of the house in peace, and this is exactly what we did after two nights' experience of this horror. But it was of no avail. Promptly as the stableclock with a muffled, half-strangulated sound gave out the hour of midnight, every soul in the house-even the children-was aroused and held in strained expectancy until the strange influence, whatever it was, had exhausted itself. I, for my part, was so affected by it that, yielding to the most intense feeling of pity for, and desire to help the poor spirit in torment, I could not resist the impulse to open the room and, going to the window, attempting to communicate with what was, to my consciousness, a I was so carried away that, my wife declares, I real presence. solemnly pledged myself to do all in my power to bring relief to the sufferer-in orthodox parlance, to lay the ghost.

#### CHAPTER II.

My first proceeding in the morning was, of course, to send for the house-agent. After some delay, he appeared, driving in his irreproachably neat trap, and was shown in, spruce and smirking, but evidently ill at ease.

"So, sir," said I, "you have thought it worth while to jeopardise your reputation as a house-agent, by letting a house which is not habitable."

"Not habitable, my dear sir? Why, what is the matter with the house?"

"Well, for one thing, the rent is too low," I replied with grim jocosity. "You, no doubt, are acquainted with the real reason for this, though you gave me a false one."

"Nay, my dear sir," returned the agent, "I, if I recollect rightly, informed you that the owner was extremely anxious to

have her house occupied, and she, therefore, greatly reduced the rental."

"Yes, but, as you doubtless are aware, that was done to give the house a character, which it had certainly lost in consequence of the inability of any tenant to remain in it more than a few days at furthest. I find myself in the same predicament and must demand of you to cancel our agreement and to return the instalment of rent paid in advance."

"Sir," cried the no longer smiling house agent, "I give in. We shall be compelled to cancel, but in the name of common charity I will ask you to give us time to refund the instalment of rent."

"A most extraordinary proposition, sir," I returned, "considering you might expect legal action to be taken in this matter."

"You would really have no case, sir. The law does not take cognisance of ghosts. I believe we could compel you to complete your contract, but I am sure Miss Reapham would not wish that. You see, sir, this lady was obliged to leave this house—her own house—under very painful circumstances some time ago."

"And by the same token, so has everyone else who has attempted to occupy the place since," I interrupted, hotly enough. "But what are these 'circumstances' which would justify an appeal to a charity which has certainly not been exercised towards others? In my own case, the results of your deception are likely to be most disastrous to my family, since we are now practically homeless. You may, however, give me the address of this somewhat unscrupulous landlady."

Which having done, the house-agent bowed himself away with a decidedly crestfallen air.

By the end of a week I had succeeded in establishing my family in a glaringly new, and consequently ghost-proof, villa at Richmond, and then I endeavoured to dismiss the vexatious episode of the Hermitage from my mind.

But the end of another week saw me on my way to unearth Miss Reapham. I had been so haunted by the pitiful voice; so penetrated with sympathy and desire to respond to this mere echo; that I felt impelled to go to the root of the matter by applying to Miss Reapham herself for information, irritated against her as I had reason to be.

I found her in a squalid little lodging at Putney, and, looking

at the poverty of her surroundings, I felt that there was some excuse for the deception which had been practised upon me.

I was further disarmed as I confronted the small, elderly, flaxen-haired woman of the genus common-place, who, with scared-looking childish blue eyes, tremblingly rose from her seat to receive me.

"I will not apologise for troubling you, Miss Reapham," I began, "as I think you owe it to me to do what you can to throw some light upon this unlucky business of the Hermitage. I suppose you were duped into ignorantly purchasing the house, as I was into hiring it."

"No, sir," she replied, "I had not even that excuse. When I invested the few hundreds left me by my widowed mother in the purchase of the house and opened it as a convalescent home for ladies of position, it was perfectly free from the taint which now renders it valueless. My only excuse is that I hoped to meet with a tenant who would not be sensitive to the disturbing influences which are now the house's great drawback."

"You can, then, actually account for these sounds," I asked eagerly.

"Nay, that would be beyond my power. I can only fix the date of their commencement," faltered Miss Reapham, as though dazed at the bare retrospect.

Recovering herself after a short interval, Miss Reapham proceeded:

"My staff of servants were all strange, with the exception of the parlour-maid, who had lived with me from the time she was twelve years old, when I kept house for my brother, whose second marriage obliged me to set up an establishment of my own. I was much attached to this girl, Winnifred, and had taken some pains with her education, in a plain way, of course. But she was not like other girls of her class, having a vexatious habit of reading at all times and seasons of leisure, and of wandering about and exploring every nook of the grounds, with the object, as she said, of discovering the Hermit's Cave, which gave the name to the house. These fads in a parlour-maid would not have been tolerated by a better disciplinarian than myself," said poor Miss Reapham apologetically, with a faint smile, "but the girl had been with me so long that it was natural I should be indulgent: Anyhow, she had quite a craze for

seeking out this cave, and only the evening before her dreadful end, the poor girl declared that she believed she had come upon it in a nook in the stable-yard, where was a small arched doorway almost hidden by accumulated rubbish and tall rank weeds. Would that I had been firm, and had laid my commands upon Winnifred to refrain from further search, but the girl's hobby seemed harmless enough, and I let her go blindly to her doom.

"One night," continued Miss Reapham, recovering from the agitation this reminiscence caused her, "Winnifred had gone to bed early with one of her bad headaches. All the best rooms in the body of the house being devoted to the use of my paying guests, I occupied the bedroom in the wing which you unfortunately selected, and as I did not choose to be alone in the wing at night, Winnifred slept in the dressing-room beyond.

"Knowing that the girl required thorough rest as a restorative I never disturbed her on these occasions after she had got to sleep. I did not depart from my custom on this night, and the house lapsed into its usual quiet soon after eleven o'clock.

"My window was as usual slightly open at the top, and as I lay wakeful, I was surprised to hear the soft patter of rain upon the glass, as the earlier part of the evening had been brilliantly moonlight. Lulled by the gentle swish of the rain and the soughing of the night breeze, I was sinking into slumber, when I distinctly heard my name called in Winnifred's voice. Broad awake in an instant, I lighted my candle, slipped on my dressing-gown and opened the door into the dressing-room.

"To my astonishment the room and the bed were empty, though the latter had evidently been occupied, and then it occurred to me that the call had come from outside the house.

"Utterly bewildered, I returned to my room, drew up the blind and raised the sash. The call was repeated in a voice of pain.

"'Where in the world are you, Winnie,' I shouted, 'and what ails you?'

"'I am in the stable-yard,' she answered back. 'I have fallen and sprained my ankle, and the gates are locked.'

"Much flustered and upset, though not seriously alarmed, I went to arouse the servants and send them to the gardener's cottage, which was situated about two hundred yards from the back gates, to fetch the keys, of which the gardener always

took charge. I was met by some of my guests, who, disturbed and alarmed at the unwonted commotion, crowded into my room.

"While I hastily dressed, some of the ladies gathered from Winnifred that, unable to sleep, she had ventured out in the moonlight to her favourite haunt, and had slipped from the mound of rubbish concealing the entrance to the fabled Hermit's Cave, and had hurt her foot so badly that she had fainted. On recovering, she found the moon clouded over, rain falling, and that she could not move herself. Quite unable to make herself heard, she had in desperation managed to drag herself to the shelter of the covered gateway, where she was now resting.

"'Courage, Winnie!' I called out to her, 'there is Laurence at this moment opening the back gates.'

"A few seconds passed, and then a succession of such piercing shricks rent the air that we all instinctively rushed downstairs and into the courtyard. As we frantically crossed it, the cries died down to a half stifled, gurgling moan:

"'O, Miss Reapham, they are strangling me!'

"Half beside ourselves, we beat upon the locked gates, calling out that help was at hand, and then, to our horror, poor Winnifred's cries ceased altogether and a moment later the girls returned with the key of the covered gates—the gardener would follow.

"We unlocked the gates and crowded into the stable-yard, expecting to find the poor girl's dead body at least. But there was no sign of her living, or dead. Stay—in the shadow of the gateway lay the little red hood Winnie was in the habit of wearing out of doors; but, search as we might, that was all.

"Laurence now appeared by way of the covered gateway, bringing the key of the back gates. It was not needed. We found them open, and fresh wheel-tracks in the narrow lane outside. Had the gardener entered from the back, he must have intercepted the murderers or kidnappers of my poor parlour-maid.

"Whichever it was, has since, in spite of every effort of the law, remained a mystery. Every part of the grounds was thoroughly investigated, and sure enough, a cave was discovered to exist in the very spot indicated by poor Winnifred in the stable-yard; and within it was found, not the signs and indications of a holy life, but a complete coiners' plant, which, in their hasty flight on being surprised, the wretches who owned it

had been compelled to leave behind. In prosecuting their nefarious trade after dark, they had doubtless come upon poor Winnifred, and, taking her for a spy, had killed or kidnapped her. However this may be, it is miserably certain that every night at the stroke of twelve, the inmates of the Hermitage are called upon to listen to the fearful cries of that midnight voice in distress, without being able to understand, much less alleviate, its pitiful exigency.

"My establishment was, of course, broken up. No one would stay to be tortured; for though I tried closing the wing from which the cries only could be heard, yet at the striking of the clock at midnight, everyone seemed impelled to awake and be held in paralysed expectancy until the influence, whatever it was, had passed."

I could not but feel that there was some justification for the manner in which the haunted house had been foisted upon me, and I left Miss Reapham rejoicing in the assurance that I would not exact the return of the instalment of rent paid, but would retain her house for three months; which latter proposal was not prompted by motives altogether so philanthropical as those Miss Reapham gave me credit for.

# PART II. WHAT BECAME OF WINNIFRED.

## CHAPTER I.

IT may have occurred to any possible reader of the first part of this "o'er true" story that the singular circumstances just recounted might be capable of scientific explanation, and that Winnifred had not been murdered, but was still in existence.

Such, at any rate, was my own strong conviction, and I determined to do what lay in my power to throw some light on the mystery.

My belief was not shared by my wife, who—with the simple faith of certain (by no means the least worthy or lovable) of her sex, considered that everything unusual must be supernatural, and that even thought-reading is uncanny—would not be persuaded to give up, in spite of my learned disquisitions on occult science, brain waves, etc., the awesome conviction that she

had been brought into personal contact with the spirit world; and was indeed so affected by her late alarming experience at Sherriton Hermitage that she began to lose flesh, and was evidently failing in health.

This was quite enough to decide me on investigating the matter, even without the incentive of my very strong desire to find a philosophical solution to the portentous events which had driven us so suddenly out of house and home.

My wife utterly refused to give me her help or countenance, declaring that any attempt at a solution of the mysterious sounds, which still haunted her imagination and deprived her of appetite and sleep, would be a "tempting of Providence," whatever that might mean, and hugged the gnawing superstition to her heart with Spartan tenacity and dread of investigation; so that when I decided, as a first step in my operations, upon retaining the Hermitage for three months, I did so without the concurrence of my wife.

It was also without her knowledge that I with a friend passed a night at the "haunted" house, going through the same formulæ and analysing the eerie sounds as far as they were capable of analysis, and coming to the conclusion that since their scope was limited and not all-pervading—restricted to the perception of persons within the house only—they might be produced under strong cerebral excitement by a person endowed with abnormal odic force.

Winnifred, a simple maid-servant, might or might not possess such a force. My next step was clearly to make myself acquainted with the girl's personal history.

But how? It flashed upon me that Miss Reapham, in my interview with her at Putney, had intimated that she had taken charge of Winnifred from the age of twelve. Miss Reapham was the person to whom to apply.

But before doing this I resolved to expose myself once more to the strange influences of the Hermitage at midnight.

My friend being unable to accompany me by the sudden illness of one of his children, I determined to face the ordeal alone.

On preparing to make my arrangements for the night as before in the bedroom in the wing, I found that the caretaker had made up a bed for me on a cot in the dressing-room. The reason for this was not far to seek in a wet stain on the ceiling

and a saturated floor in the bedroom, showing that the rain had penetrated, and was still slowly dripping into a foot-bath which had been placed under the broken patch of plaster in the ceiling.

It was to the accompaniment of this ceaseless drip, drip, which made itself distinctly audible in the silence through the closed doors of both dressing-room and study, that I waited expectantly with "hair on end" for the usual denoument. But when at length the hour of midnight was hammered from the old clock tower, and no result followed—no portentous wind, no eerie cries, no mental exaltation as though a "spirit had passed by" me, I began to feel, with the sensation of intense relief, in a manner defrauded of my just right to be horrified after so much good preparation for the same. Then a light broke in upon me, and I made up my mind to spend, at all risks, the next night in the bedroom I had before occupied.

With the object of making arrangements for this, I awaited the advent of the caretaker next morning.

The woman turned out to be the wife of the very policeman we had encountered on our first night's experience of the Hermitage; and what was more, she and her husband had been regular occupants of the basement of said Hermitage, whenever, as was mostly the case, it was unlet, and "had never had no cause to complain of disturbances by ghostes, leastways unless it were rats and mice. But then," added Mrs. Policeman, with a sly twinkle, "we never wentured so high as the bedrooms, and so slept in peace."

Disregarding Mrs. P.'s implied warning, I watched next night in the "haunted" room, and duly went through all the horrors experienced before, and so came to the conclusion that the force liberated in so ghastly a form at midnight, bent itself in the direction of, and so to speak, focussed itself in, that room whenever attracted by the magnetism of a human presence.

A few days after I repaired to Putney, and found poor Miss Reapham more hopeless, more nervous, though she greeted me with less of mistrust, than before.

I approached the subject of Winnifred as gently as I could, and Miss Reapham willingly communicated all that she herself knew of the girl's early life.

But Miss Reapham was one of those inconsequential folk

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who, like Peter Bell, "take life as it comes," without analysis or induction, and certainly without observation worthy the designation, the two former being the results of the last. Miss Reapham's "primrose" was the yellow-haired Winnifred, and it was only under strenuous cross-examination that her mistress admitted that her quondam maid "had gold-coloured hair, a pretty colour and nice teeth, and was in all respects a good, steady servant and not at all flighty, excepting in the one instance whereby she met her death, poor thing."

Thus Miss Reapham, who also furnished the information that she had taken her *protegée* from an industrial home at Kensington, where she had been maintained up to the age of twelve by a lady of rank, the name of said lady not having transpired.

"Had Winnifred any peculiarities of constitution or temperament?" I next inquired.

The poor lady searched deliberately and conscientiously the archives of memory, and at length produced the, to my mind, very important fact that the girl had been, up to the age of eighteen, subject to epileptic fits, in which she would remain for upwards of half an hour "without sense or motion." Upon regaining consciousness, she had used to be totally oblivious of everything that had taken place from the time of her seizure.

This was all I could elicit from Miss Reapham on the subject of her parlour-maid. My next attempt to obtain further information must be made at the refuge at Kensington.

Intimating as much to Miss Reapham, that lady's memory appeared to receive some sort of stimulus from this second allusion to Kensington, and she exclaimed:

"I feel sure that it was a Countess who was the patroness of my poor girl, and now I think of it, it must have been the same from whom my brother purchased that ill-omened house for me at Sherriton. I know it was the same name, and that the Countess was considered to be very eccentric."

"Can you not recollect the title?" I asked eagerly.

"I fear not," she replied, "but that is of no consequence, as the name can be found in the title-deeds of the Hermitage, which are in the hands of my lawyer, who happens to reside at Sherriton; indeed, it was he who recommended the purchase to my brother."

I believed that I saw my way now to some additional parti-



culars concerning Winnifred, and bidding farewell to Miss Reapham, who furnished me with a letter of introduction to her solicitor, I returned to town with the intention of prosecuting further inquiries at Sherriton.

#### CHAPTER II.

SOME time elapsed before I found leisure to pay my projected visit to Sherriton. I managed to do so, however, at the end of a fortnight, and duly presented Miss Reapham's letter to that lady's solicitor, Mr. Robert Brown. He was a well-to-do country practitioner, who kept hunters and maintained a somewhat precarious footing on the edge of the great world of County society, in right of his wife, who was rather well connected. This gentleman carefully adjusted his reception of me, which was brusque, to my credentials, which were evidently not impressive to him. His very walk, however, was calculated to inspire confidence, for as, with measured step and slow, he preceded me to his sanctum, he appeared anxious to leave a proof impression of each foot at every step, so carefully considered were his "proceedings." After some ceremony the title-deeds of the Hermitage with the assistance of a clerk were produced, and, following the lawyer's rather fat forefinger over the page my eye soon verified the style and title of the "Countess of Pomeroy."

This, however, was by no means the extent of the information I desired. I could doubtless have obtained as much from my old enemy, the house-agent; but confronted by the ungenial manner of the man of law, I scarcely knew how to proceed.

Taking the bull by the horns, however, I ventured to remark that I wished Miss Reapham should not be made to incur any expense on account of the trouble to which I was now putting Mr. Brown, but that if he would kindly take my name and address, since I had carelessly omitted to provide myself with a visiting card, I should be happy to defray all charges connected with this interview. The lawyer thawed visibly and referred to Miss Reapham's letter.

"Bless my soul, sir," he suddenly exclaimed, melting entirely as he managed to decipher the name of the not altogether unknown journalist introduced by Miss Reapham, "that poor woman does write such a hand! I had no idea! Permit

me to shake hands and apologise for my obtuseness. Pray consider me quite at your service."

Of course I permitted him, though with not much responsive warmth, feeling rather disgusted at the line he had taken in his treatment of Miss Reapham's representative. It would not do, however, to lose the chance now offered; so pocketing my pique, I was soon in possession of all the lawyer had to tell. Little enough to be sure, but sufficient for guidance.

The Countess Pomeroy had been, the lawyer declared, undeniably eccentric, and had, by her absurd pranks, given rise to much vulgar gossip.

"She surrounded herself," proceeded Mr. Brown, "with people who professed to believe in mesmerism and clairvoyance, and latterly constantly held spiritualistic séances at the Hermitage. She herself claimed to be a clairvoyante and medium of the first order, and I myself, in the drawing-room of the Hermitage, have witnessed some of her marvellous successes in thought-reading. Report also declared that on more than one occasion she had been for hours in the mesmeric trance. I cannot, however, vouch for the truth of this, though it was currently believed in the best circles. And really, my dear sir, if I had been of a credulous or superstitious turn," continued Mr. Brown, taking a high tone miles above any possible weakness of the kind, "when I heard of the extraordinary events said to have occurred at the Hermitage during the past two or three years, I could not have avoided speculating as to whether the diablerie of the Countess were not responsible for the strange manifestations reported as taking place there."

"Well, sir," said I, rather nettled at the other's sceptical tone, "you will admit that I was an eye—or rather, an ear-witness of these strange manifestations, as you call them. I cannot, however, at present see what the diablerie or eccentricities of the Countess of Pomeroy have to do with the poor young girl, who I fear was foully made away with, though if I find from the superintendent of the home at Kensington, as I believe will be the case, that the Countess of Pomeroy was the 'lady of rank' who befriended Winnifred, I shall consider it a most strange coincidence—it may be more than a coincidence. I shall, at any rate, leave no stone unturned to find the missing links, if any exist."

"You may not have far to seek for the connecting data," rejoined

the lawyer deliberately. "What would you say if you were told that more than one person in Sherriton believed that poor girl to have been the natural child of the Countess's half-imbecile son?"

I started to my feet. "What possible reason could you and they have for such a surmise?" I demanded. "And what is this you tell me about a son?"

"I will reply to your last question first," answered Mr. Brown. "It is within all the world's knowledge that the Countess had a son (not the heir, of course), dissipated, cataleptic, and a confirmed dipsomaniac at thirty. But in his lucid periods an outand-out poet. You as a literary man must be acquainted with the poems of——" naming a pseudonym which had appeared splendid and transient as a meteor in the literary firmament of London.

"Well enough acquainted with the one volume of poems you refer to, but until this moment totally unaware of the identity of the poet," I said. "But what are your reasons for connecting Miss Reapham's young servant with this aristocratic family?"

"Well, in the first place," replied Brown, "when the disappearance of the girl excited so much interest, many people, myself among the number, brought to mind what had often been observed without comment before, that the young servant was the living image of the old Countess, and by consequence of her son, who had strikingly resembled his mother—the same golden hair, glorious blue eyes and exquisite complexion, and a bearing we are apt to consider to belong only to those born in the purple. The girl herself, humble handmaid though she was, used to attract the notice of all her mistress's visitors by her graceful, even distinguished, manner and carriage."

"How could Miss Reapham have had the heart, to say nothing of the stupidity, to condemn such a girl to a life of servitude and menial dependence?" said I impulsively.

The lawyer shrugged his shoulders. "When the girl's own flesh and blood could condemn her as did, I firmly believe, the Countess of Pomeroy, to the life of an Industrial Refuge, you could hardly expect a stranger to be more fastidious," said Mr. Brown, drily. "Besides, Miss Reapham, even if capable of appreciating her protégée's finer points, and with the best will in the world to have brought up her charge as a lady, could not afford

to do so, and was compelled from prudential motives to make the most of her bargain."

"But," I asked, "what became of this son of the Countess? He must have borne a title."

"Truly," returned the solicitor. "He was the late Earl's second son, and died some years ago under miserable circumstances, having been placed under the charge of a keeper for some time previous to his death. The Countess herself informed me that her son had recommended a little girl to her care, as the child of a woman whom he had wronged, but inasmuch as there was not the minutest evidence of its legitimacy, she declined to treat it as other than base-born. Therefore, if you elect to go on with your inquiries, Mr. Elmore, you will not succeed in establishing any claim for the girl, even if she be living, which I take leave to doubt."

As I had not taken Mr. Brown into my confidence with regard to my theory as to the cause of the phenomena at the Hermitage, but had allowed him to suppose I was simply actuated by a desire to ascertain beyond a doubt what had been the fate of Winnifred, I did not attempt to disabuse his mind of the very natural suspicion he entertained, but, thanking him heartily for the trouble he had taken, I took my leave, more firmly resolved than ever to trace, if possible, the girl's connection with the hotblooded, mad-brained race of Pomeroy.

The superintendent of the home at Kensington, to whom I soon after applied, left me in no manner of doubt as to the identity of her late charge with the child of the unfortunate Lord Ernest Biron. The Countess of Pomeroy had, with her usual expansiveness, entrusted the superintendent with the whole history, together with her reasons for repudiating any responsibility after the child should have attained the age of sixteen years. Her directions for the treatment of her son's child were concise and to the point.

"She comes of a thoroughly bad stock," said the Countess, "on both sides. You can never 'train' the taint out of her blood. Do the best you can with her by frugal living, restraint, and hard work, and never let me see or hear anything more of her in the future. I wash my hands of her entirely."

Fate had proved kinder than the Countess, for a time that is to say, and poor Winnifred, guarded and guided by beneficent influences, had spent some peaceful years at least.

A warm feeling of compassion for Winnifred now supplemented the philosophical instinct which prompted me to probe this matter to the bottom. With what success shall be told in another chapter.

## CHAPTER III.

\*O, THAT this too, too solid flesh would melt!" sighed the sorely perplexed Prince of Denmark, and like him I groaned in spirit over the seemingly impenetrable veil which enshrouded the mystery of the Hermitage.

For weeks I came upon no clue or suggestion, and yet the solution, marvellous as it was and in itself unexplainable at the present stage of "slowly creeping science," was preparing, the dry bones stirring, within a mile of my daily habitat; nay, I could have laid my hand upon it any time within the few weeks my tenancy of the Hermitage had still to run.

But one week remained during which I had the house at my disposal, and on the Wednesday of that week my friend, Professor Henley, anxious to witness in his own proper person the phenomena at Sherriton, proposed to accompany me thither and pass a night at the Hermitage.

I acquiesced, but found myself, owing to a sudden and strenuous call for "copy," unable to keep my engagement with the professor, who, however, elected to make his "experiment in natural science," as he chose to consider it, alone, rather than lose the opportunity offered.

Warning my friend to occupy no other room than the first one in the wing at the "Hermitage," I despatched instructions to the caretaker, and then endeavoured to dismiss the subject from my mind.

I was returning from my office via Piccadilly on my way home to Kensington, when, a few minutes before midnight, with my mind irresistibly drawn to the scene which was probably about to be enacted at Sherriton, I crossed the "Circus."

On entering Piccadilly I encountered the usual female contingent of the Rescue Army on their nightly crusade against the world, the flesh and the devil. I was too well acquainted with the value of the work nightly performed amidst hideous surroundings by these indefatigable women—of the depths to which they reached, depths unplumbed by any other existing organi-

sation (on the same scale, at least)—to entertain any feelings but those of respect for them. As I stood aside to allow the little band to pass, the hour of midnight was struck from a "hundred towers," and at the same moment a tall girl, straight as a poplar, clad in the hideous bonnet, but otherwise becoming garb of the "Army," swayed as she passed me, and fell to the ground in a heap before assistance could reach her.

The cry among the women immediately arose for Captain Maybank, and I naturally expected to be relieved of my now perfectly rigid burden by a red-breasted, gold-banded male officer of the contingent. But to my surprise a frail-looking, dark-eyed woman, evidently a lady, answered to the summons, and was assailed on all sides by the information given in impressive whispers, that the Sister had had another seizure, and was in one of her epileptic fits again.

The "Captain" advanced with decision, and promptly proceeded, while I raised the helpless and immobile figure, to transfer the girl's head to her own shoulder, hastily covering the face with a handkerchief. As she did so the unsightly head-gear fell back, and I caught a momentary glimpse of a golden head and widely-opened blue eyes, glaring wildly from a face of deathly pallor.

I felt stunned—my very heart stood still, and I could hardly manage to articulate, "Is she subject to these attacks, madam?" "Ah, yes, indeed, poor girl," replied the Captain. "They have been rather frequent of late, after nearly a year's complete cessation. I fear her strength will not bear the recurrence of many more such."

By this time a crowd of some of the worst and most depraved characters in London had collected around us, but an orderly, sympathetic crowd on the whole; only two or three men giving utterance to ribald remarks, and but one woman, I noticed, who not only openly jeered at, but absolutely spat upon, all and sundry of the spiritual Amazons who happened to come within range, for she was too helplessly intoxicated to be very actively obscene. The majority of the poor haggard and ruined creatures appeared anxious to give assistance to the kindly "blue-bonnets," and it was noticeable that the police, observing that the R. A. contingent formed the nucleus of the knot of outcasts, did not think it necessary to interfere beyond giving help by procuring an ambulance from the nearest station. This was quite needed,

as, though the climax of the fit was past after twenty minutes' duration and the danger over, the poor girl was completely exhausted and would sleep, Captain Maybank informed me, for the next twelve hours, awaking at the end of that time wholly unconscious of what had happened, but depressed beyond belief for days afterwards.

The last particulars were imparted to me by the "Captain" as we followed the ambulance to the nearest R. A. refuge, and on giving her my card, entreating to be allowed to call and inquire for the patient later on in the morning, Captain Maybank gave me rendezvous at the head-quarters in Queen Street.

The reader will not require to be told that I was strongly impressed with the idea that I had found Winnifred, and that the mystery of Sherriton Hermitage was about to be solved by the exhibition of phenomena almost as incomprehensible, though not, in the light of science, altogether unthinkable by us who march in the "foremost files of time."

So eager was I to hear the history of the "sister," as I had heard her called by the crowd, that without waiting for Professor Henley's report, I hurried to Queen Street, and on sending in my name, was at once introduced to Captain Maybank's presence.

That officer struck me as looking slighter and frailer and fuller of energy in the daylight than when arrayed in her long cloak, as I had seen her the night before; but the dark eyes glowed with a steady fire, which was full of influence, though it lost some of its power for me by reason of the cant of the Army into which the Captain unconsciously fell in describing, somewhat reluctantly, the circumstances of her first meeting with "Lieutenant" Audley, as she was called, from the street, I was told, where she was first met with. I shall not inflict upon the reader the peculiar Rescue Army dialect, in which Captain Maybank gave me Lieutenant Audley's history, as far as she knew it, though I have reason to be convinced that that dialect, broad and extravagant as it sometimes is, is eminently well adapted to touch and stir the indurated consciousness of those to whom it is chiefly addressed.

Briefly then, Captain Maybank had been a witness to the arrest, about two years before, of the girl who had so aroused my suspicions of her identity with the Winnifred of the "Hermitage," for passing a counterfeit coin in a shop in Audley Street.

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The girl firmly refused to incriminate her accomplices, and was duly sentenced to a term of imprisonment. The Rescue Army never lost sight of her, however, and on her release received her into its ranks on probation. The girl justified its kindly charity by working like a horse at the grim task of rescuing others; by living harder than the hard living of the majority of her comrades, and by observing a scrupulous honesty in all dealings, which went far to prove that probity was natural to her.

"But," continued the Captain, with a strong emphasis on the "but," "you will be surprised to hear that the girl has lost all memory of her life previous to her association with the band of coiners, whose instrument she was when arrested. She refused at first to reveal the only name she knew herself by, and accepted the one we bestowed upon her without question after her release; but she still obstinately persists in concealing the locality of the coiners' den, though I believe she is aware, perhaps from personal investigation, that the gang is long since broken up and dispersed, for I notice that she no longer watches the newspapers, as at first."

"Can you recall the date when she ceased to watch for news?" I enquired.

"I think," replied the "Captain," "it would be about six months since that she ceased to show any curiosity about the contents of the daily papers. I am certain that her mind has been more at rest from that time, which leads me to the conclusion that she felt a special interest in, perhaps mortal fear, of some one of the precious band with whom she was so strangely associated. But now, Mr. Elmore," suddenly turning her bright glance in my direction, "am I to receive no confidence in return for my budget, or is the reciprocity to be all on one side?" she added quaintly.

"Give me until to-morrow, my dear lady," I said, "and your confidence shall be reciprocated a hundredfold, as you will acknowledge. But I have to make a few inquiries and then my case will be complete."

"The case is complete already," exclaimed the gallant captain with flashing eyes. "Do you know that you have forgotten to enquire after the health of Winnifred?"

"Winnifred!" I exclaimed, dumbfounded by this use of the girl's name, which had never passed my lips in the captain's hearing. "Have you really identified your officer with Miss Reapham's Winnifred, and how in the name of the Marvellous has it come about?"

"We have it from Winnifred's own lips," replied Captain Maybank quietly. "She awoke after only a few hours' sleep-to speak figuratively—clothed and in her right mind, that is to say, with her lost memory restored, though, of course, having been insensible during the transit, she is unaware of the means by which she was transferred from her quiet, orderly life at Sherriton, to be the companion and instrument of a desperate gang of coiners, at whose very idea she still shudders."

"But how was this brought about?" I feebly ejaculated. "Was the shock of last night more powerful than usual? For her memory must have been restored by the same means as those by which she lost it."

"Nay, that I cannot tell," replied the captain. "The girl is quite oblivious of what takes place during her trance, but she is quite clear as to never having heard your name, and is totally at a loss to account for your kind interest in her."

"The only communication I have ever held with Winnifred," said I quietly, "has been in the spirit," and I forthwith related to Captain Maybank the whole story of my connection with the Hermitage at Sherriton down to the night before, which was to witness the experiment of my friend Professor Henley.

The captain clapped her hands excitedly.

"The Professor is the man to solve this last problem! Gogo to him directly, Mr. Elmore, for the love of Heaven, and let us know what miracle has restored this poor girl to herself."

# CHAPTER IV.

My invitation to Captain Maybank to accompany me to the house of the professor being declined, I took my leave, and selecting a hansom with a "likely" horse, was soon face to face with the professor.

That sage (ætat 40) received me, to my horror, with a burst of laughter. His prolonged "Ha, ha, ha! ho, ho, ho!" froze my blood, for I could but conclude that the night's experiences had turned his brain, especially when he roared:

"Nicked him, by Jove, as neatly as you please; there couldn't have been anything neater."

"But," quavered I remorsefully, "I thought, professor, that you went to Sherriton to exorcise a ghost."

"Ghost be hanged!" said the professor coolly. "I exorcised

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a burglar, which was much more to the purpose, though if I am not very much mistaken, the ghost was dished as well as the burglar. But listen and you shall know all about it."

Surprised, not to say shocked, at this unscientific language, I meekly obeyed, and the professor proceeded.

"The first thing I did on arriving at that precious house of yours was to turn into bed so as to snatch an hour's sleep before the ghost was due, as I expected to get no rest afterwards, and was quite able to trust myself to awake in the nick of time.

"I imagined that the fateful hour was come when I was aroused by the stealthy raising of the window sash. Thought I, that sounds human, at any rate, and quietly waited. I had removed all obstructions in the shape of furniture from about the window, so as to give the ghost every chance of making itself manifest, but the opening now was filled by a very fleshly figure indeed, in the act of throwing a very substantial limb over the window-sill, and tentatively sitting astride thereon.

"The caretaker had informed me before leaving for the night that my bedroom ceiling had been made weather-proof, and that I should be privileged to sleep without danger of drowning, so I immediately arrived at the conclusion, on seeing the burglar, that the workmen, with their accustomed forethought, had left their ladder for the use of the first housebreaker that came along. The present incumbent of my window-sill must have made his way through the deserted stable-yard, being probably well acquainted with the topography of the place.

"As I was quietly feeling for the revolver I had placed under my pillow—for though the fellow was distinctly visible to me in the bright moonlight, my bed was so placed that he could not see me—a strong blast of wind swept into the room and reminded me of my object in being there. The man's body swayed and rocked convulsively, buffeted by a wind which never blew from land or sea, while he clung with desperate clutch to the sides of the window, and instead of at once entering the room as I expected, he turned his face rigidly in the opposite direction, and appeared to wait like myself for the space of thirty seconds or so, and then the hour of midnight began to strike, and all those gruesome incidents followed, which you have described so dramatically, though with, I have reason to believe, ten-fold force and power, for the man on the window-sill appeared to become completely mad. He raved and yelled

in answer to the pitiful sighing and moaning of the poor girl's voice, wildly repudiating any intention to hurt her, and appealing to her to exonerate him from having had any hand in destroying her life, and with the final agonised scream in which the voice ejaculates that she is being murdered, the man fell back into the room in strong convulsions. I tore down a bell rope, and, though I am a burly fellow myself, I had infinite difficulty in securing the burglar's arms; which accomplished, however, I loosened his neck-wrap, and dashed water over his face, and then I proceeded to knot the towels together and secure his legs to the bed-post. After which I managed to huddle on some clothes, and going to the front of the house signalled for a policeman."

This was a sufficiently marvellous story, and I quite agreed with the professor that he had probably captured the chief of the gang of coiners (on a nightly prowl, seeking whom he might devour) who had kidnapped Winnifred. I was somewhat disappointed, however, at the coolness with which my friend received my account of Winnifred's seizure and restoration to herself simultaneously with his adventure at the Hermitage.

"Nothing could be clearer," promulgated the professor. "The girl's memory had been paralysed by a shock, and by a shock—the horror of seeing in her trance, the man who had at least attempted to take her life, and who subsequently constantly threatened to do so unless she carried out his abominable schemes—her memory was restored."

The professor further discoursed learnedly on the generation of odic force, and of brain-waves in certain sensitive organisations, explaining for the behoof of my unscientific understanding that doubtless Winnifred was such a sensitive medium, and that her agonised but ineffectual efforts to penetrate the wall of mystery which shut out all her previous existence, and to free herself from the thraldom of the abandoned wretches who held her at their mercy, gave her the power of will to project her passionate longings for liberty in the form of cries and entreaties to the only friend she could trust, whenever a human presence occupied the room.

While strong enough to do this, her force was not sufficiently great to adapt the means exactly to the end, but only blindly and clumsily to grope a way out of the darkness. That it at length accomplished this result is certain, for never after the

night of the professor's watch, was the peace of the Hermitage at Sherriton disturbed by ghostly sounds or other unaccountable phenomena.

With some misgivings as to the effect upon her of confronting the villain who had ruined her life, Winnifred, supported and comforted by her good friend, Miss Reapham, was brought to Sherriton to give evidence against her tyrant. He was convicted and sentenced to penal servitude for fourteen years.

Miss Reapham, assisted by friends interested in her pitiful case, resumed the occupancy of her house and did well with it as a boarding establishment. Her great desire that Winnifred should return to her was not to be gratified.

"No, dear Miss Reapham," said the girl in reply to her old mistress's entreaties, "I cannot return to you. You never knew what a wicked girl I was—how restless and dissatisfied, how often absent from your house in search of change when you believed me happy and busy at home. I have been well punished for my deception, but I am not changed; I still crave for excitement; the quiet of your life here would kill me. I love you and am thankful to you, but I will continue with the Rescue Army if they will have me."

Winnifred was right. The hereditary taint in her blood could never be eradicated. Neither could certain fine qualities also inherent in it. She was not one of the "cheaply organised, self-saturated young persons," as described by the genial—and terrible—" Autocrat," who can spend years of their existence occupied solely with their own small perfections and low aims, and the Rescue Army offered ample scope for the energies of such an one as Winnifred.

Placed under the "retort" of placid domesticity (wanting the love that is self-sustaining), Winnifred's vitality would have been gradually exhausted out of her; but in the wider atmosphere of the world, with the awful consequences of immorality and crime ever present as a deterrent; battling with vice, helping and comforting the helpless, rescuing those who still tremble on the brink of perdition, Winnifred finds breathing space, and what is more—the only panacea for a blighted existence.

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# BELGRAVIA.

FEBRUARY, 1896.

# Joan & Mrs. Carr.

By "RITA."

Author of "Peg the Rake," "Sheba," "Asenath of the Ford,"
"The Ending of My Day," etc.

# CHAPTER VII.

#### THE LAW OF ATTRACTION.

JOAN O'ROURKE found ample food for reflection in the contrasts of life afforded by that brief stay in London. The empty exactions of society on the one hand, the strenuous efforts at its improvement, or abolition, on the other, struck her as more entertaining than effectual.

To an onlooker, at once disinterested and observant, it all seemed so useless and purposeless; an effort feeble as that of Sisyphus to roll his stone even one inch forward. The *elegantes* and beauties of the Park seemed scarcely of the same sex as those crop-haired and tailor-clad reformers who clamoured for equal rights with man, and for whom the election hoardings or the platform, the meetings of demagogues, and the overpopulation of the East End, held all the strongest interests of life.

It was not only the social but the sexual struggle that astonished the girl. The dominant note had indeed sounded. It rang out in the columns of the daily journals and the literature of the hour. The pulpit and the Park alike gave it prominence, and the fashionable drama allowed its challenge to ring forth as the newest attraction for jaded tastes.

When Joan heard that note repeated again and again, when the grievances, errors and morbid cravings of the Eternal

Feminine greeted her in drawing-room, and club and theatre alike, she began to wonder what would be the result of this endless complaining.

Did woman really know what she wanted? and would she be any better off when she got it?

Fresh from a country where temperament makes life content with little, and where the strife of sexual competition was yet unknown, it seemed more than strange to listen to the clamour and complaints that were rising on all sides—waves on a sea that threatened vengeance for a long enforced calm, and were gaining strength and storm with every hour.

Yet outwardly the world went on its old way. Women shopped, and gossipped and whispered the naughtiest stories of each other with the usual zest. Men studied the fashion of a tie, or a shirt stud, what time they lounged down Piccadilly or Bond Street, or spent idle hours watching the life of the streets from club windows.

Dinner parties and balls claimed tired mondaines; and listless youths, to whom life was all boredom, affixed their button-holes, and let their hansoms carry them to Grosvenor Square, and Park Lane, to meet the same crowd with which they exchanged greetings in the Row, and murmured scandals at church parade, and had seen at Henley and Hurlingham even as they would see them again at Goodwood and Cowes, at Homburg and Spa and Trouville, and all the places that had no interest and no beauty save what fashion decreed.

"There's something rotten in the state of Denmark," quoted Joan, as their victoria sped along the noisy streets, bound for an afternoon *musicale* at Chelsea, at a house where the best singers and latest novelty in long-haired pianists were sure to be met.

She was looking her loveliest in creamy silk, with touches of black velvet, and a black picture hat covering her sunny brown hair.

Mrs. Carr looked at her with some surprise and some amusement.

- "What makes you say that?" she asked.
- "I don't know. It flashed across me, remembering all I've seen and done in these two weeks. Do you never get tired of it. Aunt Bet?"
  - "Of the world? No. It amuses me always. I take it at its

own value. It never deceives me. I am always diverted. I am often astonished, but I'm never bored."

"Whatever will you do in the country?" asked Joan, with a pitying glance at a flower-girl, sitting by her faded, drooping wares at a street corner. "Oh, do stop one moment, Price," she entreated, and then threw some silver into the girl's lap as her languid eyes glanced up at the carriage.

"My dear Joan, when will you learn the evils of indiscriminate charity?" exclaimed Mrs. Carr. "That'll all go in beer, you know."

"She doesn't look as if she drank beer," said the girl, quietly.
"Her face was so sad, and she looked so hot and tired, and her flowers were all dying."

Mrs. Carr said no more on the subject. She, too, had her charitable moments, when she could not find it in her heart to bestow help on the hungry and suffering only in an organised and parliamentary manner.

"But about Denmark?" she resumed, as the carriage turned down one of those narrow streets which coachmen choose as short cuts, and where the craze for æstheticism was made manifest by the Japanese pottery in the windows, the sunflowers on the chimney-pieces, and the sage greens and dull blues of the wall-papers.

The houses were all hideous and all alike—dull, red brick, and an attempt at a porch, with cheap coloured glass let in to illustrate a builder's idea of artistic fitness.

Joan sighed as she glanced at the ugly staring row.

"I meant everything, I think," she said. "Life, society, poor and rich, art and talent; it is unsatisfying and so foolish, and it might be so much better."

"Of course it might," said Mrs. Carr briskly. "But then, Rome wasn't built in a day, and improvements can't keep pace with our wishes. I've noticed that you are more dissatisfied with life than ever since you went to the New Club. I'm sorry I took you. You'll never get any enjoyment out of life if you go asking the why and wherefore of it. You ought to accept it as you do the workings of a watch. As long as it keeps time, that's all you ask of it. If you were to dissect the springs and pull out the wheels, the watch itself would be of no use to you at all."

"I think my tastes are naturally simple," said Joan, gravely, "and all this rush and hurry, and excitement and rivalry, seem to me out of place and infinitely absurd. As for enjoyment—well, I enjoy a sunset, a river scene, a beautiful poem, a clever book, a piece of music; but not the crush of a ball-room, the endless courses and unnecessary wines of a dinner-party, the semi-indecencies of modern Art, the morbid impurity of modern plays. I want something healthy, fresh, clean! Here I feel as if I can't breathe, or move, or even think freely."

"Oh, faith! you do that," laughed Mrs. Carr. "I belive you've picked up a lot of this stuff from Tommy Attwood. He's always talking to you, I notice."

Joan laughed.

"He's very amusing," she said; "but he doesn't believe half he says. It's only surface satire with him, as with so many others. That's what I find fault with—this half-hearted sincerity, this attempt to ridicule and abuse what every action of our lives upholds. Why must we be hypocrites, Aunt Bet? I believe I should drift into it too, if I lived here long."

"Well, if we weren't, I don't know what would happen," said Mrs. Carr, amusedly. "We should get into fine scrapes, I'm sure. Fancy saying to a visitor, 'Oh! bother take you! What did you come here for? I didn't want to see you!' Or to a hostess, 'My dear madam, it has been a hateful evening. You simply don't know how to give a party!' Or to a society belle, 'Why on earth do you paint your face like that, since a child could see it wasn't a natural colour?' and so on. Isn't it pleasanter to go through life pretending that visitors are agreeable, and parties never dull, and that all women owe their complexions to nature and soap and water? At least, it makes the wheels run smooth, and gets one the reputation of being charming."

"Wasn't that Captain Talbot who went by in that hansom?" asked Joan, quickly.

"I didn't see," said Mrs. Carr. "It's not unlikely. He's always going away and always turning up. I expect he will be at Lady Buller's. He's passionately fond of music."

Just the faintest tinge of colour crept into her face as she met Joan's eyes. The girl saw it and wondered. She had not yet learnt that the Counsellor, as Lady Kate called him, was more than any other of her hundred and one friends to Mrs. Carr.

She leant back in her seat and did not speak again till the victoria drew up at the tall, red-brick, Queen-Anne mansion, which was their destination.

A sense of pleasure curiously distinct from any feeling she usually experienced on entering drawing-rooms, thrilled Joan O'Rourke's sensitive heart as she looked round the beautiful and artistic rooms, and glanced from them through open windows and Cairo-screened balcony to the shining river and full-leaved foliage of Battersea Park. This part of London was new to her.

As she sat back in her chair in the cool, flower-filled rooms that were for once uncrowded, and listened to choice gems of music and the perfection of artistic singing from operatic stars, she confessed that there might be such a thing as an enjoyable "At Home," and felt annoyed as she met the ubiquitous Tommy Attwood's wandering glance and jerky bow. She knew instinctively that he would make his way to her side and then peace and enjoyment would be over.

Tommy Attwood was one of the "smart set," and loved nothing better than the sound of his own voice, and the expression of his own opinions.

To him "nothing was good, nothing was fair, nothing was lovely." Sensationalism was the breath of his life, and scandal the idol of his soul. When the last notes of Ben Davis's exquisite tenor had floated into silence and a murmur of applause was sounding aristocratic pleasure, Tommy left his seat by the side of a fashionable lady novelist, who did "pars" for the World and contributed British Museum articles to the Fortnightly, and who always spoke of George Meredith as a failure and Mrs. Humphrey Ward as "one of the three Incomprehensibles," and was generally vague and shallow and smart, and self-laudatory, as became a titled person who had condescended to swell the ranks of literature.

Tommy had conceived a sudden passion for the beautiful Irish girl, who belied all the traditions of her race by her grave and severe dignity, and the utter absence of "local colour" in her speech.

He was not a marrying man, as he took good care to tell every girl on whom his butterfly fancy rested for a moment, but he admired beauty, and could appreciate good breeding if only by contrast to the slang expressions and slipshod English that fashion had decreed was "smart."

Joan shook hands with him as he slipped into a vacant seat. At the same moment she noted Captain Talbot's tall figure making its way towards them. She felt a little bit annoyed that he had not been quicker. There was no other vacant seat at hand.

"You never told me you were coming here, Miss Joan," said Tommy Attwood, reproachfully.

He invariably called her that, having a rooted objection to surnames, either male or feminine.

"Am I supposed to tell you every place I'm going to, Mr. Attwood?"

"When you know what a pleasure it is to me to meet you it would at least be charitable," he said.

She glanced at his pale, clean-shaven face and weak mouth with something of content in her frank eyes.

- "I am afraid I am not charitable—in your sense of the word," she said coolly.
- "I suppose you mean it's all one whether you meet me or not. That's cruel, Miss O'Rourke; you've made me suffer a great deal at your hands. Lady Scatterton was telling me just now I'd grown thin, and was positively glum—I to be called glum? It's positively alarming. I shall lose character as well as weight. Do you want to listen to the music? I wish you wouldn't. Let me take you to the tea-room, or out on the balcony, it's positively rural out there—river and trees and bridge—and those trotty little blinds; don't let anyone see in from the street, though you can see out. Come from Cairo, really; no imitation Liberty things. Do come."
- "No thank you," said Joan, coldly. "I came to hear the music."
  - "But you can hear it out there."
- "I daresay; but if I go out there you will talk, and I can't listen to two things at once."
- "You're very candid. I suppose I may consider myself snubbed—and after toiling to the wilds of Chelsea on a broiling afternoon just to see you."
  - "I'm quite sure you've toiled here, as you call it, in the

interest of your paper, and not to see me," said Joan, with a bow to Captain Talbot, who had just reached their row of chairs.

"Indeed, you're wrong; the paper is of no consequence."

"I thought it was the most important periodical of the age."

"To its editor, I suppose, but not to me! I should be sorry if my interests were so narrowed or so limited; which reminds me that I'm suffering agonies with neuralgia."

"Have the tooth out," advised Joan.

"I said neuralgia; no one has toothache nowadays: it's wulgar."

"Then I should advise you to go to the other end of the room. There's a draught here," she said.

"I believe you want to get rid of me," said Tommy, reproachfully. "Cruel Amanda, and I've always heard Irish people were so kind-hearted."

"You English seem to have a great many fallacies about Irish people," said Joan. "I have never yet heard an argument in favour of Home Rule that wasn't as feeble as it was untrue. I was introduced the other day to one of its most ardent supporters. I asked him if he had ever been in Ireland. He admitted he had stayed ten days once at Kingstown. From that he considered himself able to judge of the wants, character, policy and dispositions of the whole nation. I might as well go to Ealing or Norwood, and say I knew England."

"Oh, we mustn't talk politics," said Tommy. "They don't suit such pretty lips as yours; and as for Home Rule, I loathe the words. Such rot!"

"It did very well for the catch-word of a party," said Joan; "and that is all that elections need, it seems to me."

"You don't mean to say you ever read about such things as elections?" exclaimed Tommy. "You're the first girl I ever met that mentioned one of her own accord."

Joan smiled.

"Every time I meet you," she said, "you tell me I'm the first girl you've ever heard, say or do some particular thing. Is your experience very limited, or am I to consider myself very uncommon?"

Tommy looked doubtful.

"I don't know about my experience," he said, "but you're certainly uncommon. Oh, here's some more music, dash it! Do

come out on the balcony or down to the refreshment-room. You don't surely want to listen to a girl playing the fiddle?"

- "I came here to hear music," answered Joan, "not to gaze at a view of Battersea Park, or sip iced coffee."
  - "Or talk to me," murmured Tommy, plaintively.
- "Or—talk to you," she said decisively, "hard as it may seem to believe."

He gave her a reproachful glance, and rose from his chair. She moved rapidly into it. Mrs. Carr noticed the action, and followed her example by taking the seat left vacant. Captain Talbot dropped quietly into hers, and three people listened to a violin solo in the happy consciousness of mutual proximity.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## "OUR MUTUAL FRIEND."

- "I CAN give you a seat back if you like," said Mrs. Carr to Captain Talbot, as they stood in the tea-room partaking of ices and claret cup, among a crowd of chattering, eager people, similarly engaged.
- "You are very kind," he said delightedly; then his eyes fell on the fabric of her gown, and turned from thence to Joan's delicate, creamy draperies. "But I shall crush your dresses," he added regretfully.
- "Oh, no," said Joan, glancing up with that warm, swift smile of hers; "I can answer for mine, and Aunt Bet's is only foulard."
- "Pity the ignorance of a mere man," said the Captain, "who only knows that they both look as delightful as they are fragile."
- "I would rather have that opinion than the one of the *initiated* man," said Joan, "for he would tell us the name of the fabric, and probably know its cost, or remark that the style didn't suit us, by way of showing off his superior knowledge."

The Captain looked pleased. He had been so often snubbed by girls to whom he only represented "fogeydom" that this simple bit of approval constituted surprise as well as pleasure.

"I am glad I have not acquired that knowledge," he said, "or I might have incurred your displeasure, though it seems impossible that either Mrs. Carr or yourself could call down criticism in point of dress." Mrs. Carr turned towards him.

"For a man who professes he doesn't know how to pay a compliment, you manage to turn some very pretty phrases, Captain," she said.

He tried to make his face express nothing, but failed signally. His whole, honest, simple soul shone out of his honest blue eyes.

Before he could speak, Mrs. Carr had again flashed round on someone standing near her, and was rattling off a string of inquiries and remarks with an aptitude born of long practice and perfect indifference to the answers or remarks of other people.

In "making conversation" modern society generally means making a noise, and it apparently answers the purpose quite as well.

Joan took compassion on the deserted admirer.

"I did not expect to see you again in London," she said.
"How could you forsake your yacht, and return to this?"

He followed her glance round the crowded tea-room, and the babel of voices sounded doubly discordant in the momentary hush.

"It seems rather foolish," he said, "but I was looking over my list of engagements, and I found that I had promised to come here. I am very fond of music," he added, as if in apology.

Joan smiled.

"So am I," she said. "Did you like the violin or the singing best?"

"Oh, the singing! In my opinion there is no music that equals a beautiful human voice. By the way"—he looked at her eagerly—"you sing, do you not? I am sure Mrs. Carr told me so."

"Yes," said the girl simply, "I sing. I have not had much training, and I cannot do anything operatic or showy as we have heard to-day. That lady with the staccato notes would laugh at me, I expect."

" I should like to hear you," he said.

"That is not quite impossible," she answered. "You will no doubt have an opportunity some day."

She handed him her cup to put down, and again he found himself thinking how pretty she was, and what a charming picture she made even in a room that was full of charming pictures. The group about them suddenly broke up. He saw a seat near them, and they both dropped into it in the most natural manner in the world, while Mrs. Carr was assuring an eagle-nosed dowager of the veriest "haut ton" that a certain indiscreet scandal floating in the social atmosphere was perfectly and entirely true, and that she had information respecting it from the very fountain head.

Captain Talbot and Joan did not talk scandal during ten minutes of entire forgetfulness on Mrs. Carr's part, but they seemed to understand each other with what Joan afterwards described as "quite a ready made sympathy," and got on amazingly well.

When Mrs. Carr remembered them, she found also that it was time to depart, and swept them off in her train to a chorus of "good-byes" and "handshakes" that created quite an atmosphere of popularity about them.

Captain Talbot took the back seat of the victoria without more objections, and had the pleasure of contrasting the two brilliant and charming faces before him during the homeward drive.

"I declare this is the very last thing I shall go to," announced Mrs. Carr as they discussed the afternoon.

"You say that after every party," said Joan, "and then there's always one more and one more."

"I was half afraid you might have left town before this At Home," observed Captain Talbot, betraying in the innocence of his heart a very obvious reason for his own appearance at it.

"Oh, Aunt Bet seems incapable of tearing herself away from the delights of the season," said Joan. "I find myself wondering how she is going to exist without them."

"Oh, it will be over soon," said Mrs. Carr, "and I suppose I shall extract amusement even out of country society. I mean to try my best. I hope the people are not very starchy, Captain Talbot?"

"They are not at all like London folk," he answered. "But they may have improved since I lived amongst them."

"Have you ever known what ennui is, Captain Talbot?" asked Joan.

"No, I have always had too much to do. Real things—not shams."

"Ah, it's a world of shams," said Mrs. Carr. "I wonder how

we put up with it, or each other? Now, those people we've left behind us, they'll be telling Lady Buller what a charming afternoon they've had, and how delightful the music was, and I know for a fact that half of them would rather have heard Stratton do 'The Whistling Coon,' or Chevalier sing 'The Old Kent Road' than listen to Wagner and Saint-Saens interpreted by real artistes."

"The others are real artistes too, in their way," observed Joan, and work just as hard, I've no doubt."

"Joan has a good word for everyone," said Mrs. Carr, "except Tommy Attwood; she always snubs him. He told me to-day she'd as good as told him the music was more interesting than his conversation."

"And so it was," said Joan, quietly.

"But you needn't have told him so. I don't want our names left out of the list at Lady Buller's At Home simply because you put Tommy in a bad temper."

"Is he so small?" asked Joan, contemptuously.

"Well, he's quite capable of making one pay for the pleasure of snubbing him."

"I should hold the pleasure cheaply bought even at the price of being ignored in the columns of the Scalpel," said Joan.

Her colour rose. Her eyes sparkled. Captain Talbot thought how becoming indignation could be to some faces.

"I can't understand that fellow's popularity," he remarked.

"It annoys me to hear the impertinent things he says of—and to—women. I wonder they can allow it."

"Oh, that's only to show he belongs to the 'smart' set," said Joan. "Personality is the new form of politeness that distinguishes men and women."

"You are observant, I see, Miss O'Rourke."

"I was interested," she said. "It was all so new to me. When I heard people talking and laughing incessantly, I used to wonder whether it was at anything really amusing or witty. I generally found it was at something spiteful or untrue, and the more nonsense a woman chattered the more brilliant she seemed to be considered."

"It's very nice to be popular," said Mrs. Carr. "I don't find fault with any woman trying to make herself so. Look at Mrs. Random now—'Sparks,' they call her. The moment she

appears she is surrounded. She is hand and glove with all the best people in London, and her sayings are quoted as if she were a miracle of wit."

"I am not often uncharitable," observed Captain Talbot.

"But I think that if you heard what is said of this 'popular' lady in clubs and smoking-rooms you would be less inclined to envy her reputation."

Mrs. Carr looked slightly uncomfortable, and was silent for a few moments. The victoria bowled smoothly along, and turned into Sloane Square.

"Have you any engagement this evening, Captain Talbot?" she asked suddenly. "If not, do come and dine with us. Joan shall give you some music. We are quite alone."

"I shall be only too delighted," he said, and he looked it. "What time?"

"Oh, half-past seven," said Mrs. Carr. "Would you be very shocked if I asked you to take us to a music-hall afterwards? It's the one thing Joan hasn't seen, and I've always told her I must wait for a *safe* escort. It's not the place that matters, you know, Captain Talbot, but so much depends on whom one goes with!"

Captain Talbot's sunburnt cheek took a slightly deeper shade of colour. The compliment was ambiguous, and he would have preferred taking them anywhere but to a music-hall. He felt constrained, however, to express his entire willingness to fall in with his hostess's desires; and parted from them with a bewildered consciousness that he did not half understand Irishwomen.

. . . . . . .

Later on that evening he had never felt less inclined to do anything in his life than to leave that pretty, artistic drawing-room with Joan's thrilling notes still ringing in his ears, and take her into the garish lights, and impure, sensuous atmosphere of the music hall that Mrs. Carr had selected.

Contrast did not appeal so forcibly to him as to her, and he preferred the lights and shades of life to harmonise rather than to clash. But Mrs. Carr was in one of her reckless moods, and sat-well in the front of the box he had secured, and laughed at the comic singers, and enjoyed the hackneyed jokes and generally idiotic nature of the entertainment as heartily as

if she were a boy of fifteen "seeing life," instead of a woman verging on forty, to whom it had shown a great deal too much.

Joan sat back, and seemed more interested in the audience than in the performance. She wondered how those rows of young men could applaud the senseless duets of the Sisters Tottie, who might have been fifty, and were got up like sixteen; or the coarse innuendoes of the comic man; or roar at the vile broque of an Irishwoman whose tastes were murderous, and whose attire was only possible to an invention that had no national bias. She gazed with eyes of shrinking wonder at the painted and beautifully costumed women promenading endlessly to and fro. That morbid curiosity inseparable from restraint of sex and ignorance of youth, took possession of her for the first time, and she felt annoyed and ashamed that they had come here with a man like Captain Talbot.

Mrs. Carr apparently had no such scruples. Her laugh was so hearty that many eyes turned to the box where her handsome face was lending all its encouragement of enjoyment to the performers of a descriptive dance—with limelight effects. She was not aware herself that she was attracting notice—or that no less a personage than Tommy Attwood happened to be in the promenade, and had recognised her at once. A curious smile flitted across the thin lips of the fashionable journalist.

"I can pay that girl out now if I choose," he thought, turning a "par" neatly and sharply in his own mind, and acidulating it with the vinegar of baffled conceit in the process. "Who have they got with them, I wonder?"

He fixed his eyeglass and stared up at the box. As he saw Captain Talbot he looked less pleased. The captain was a champion few men would have cared to challenge, and had a reputation for good, honest "straight hitting," that had somewhat interfered with his Parliamentary ambitions. A man with a conscience and no party scruples, was not a promising candidate in the opinions of independent electors!

Tommy knew him well enough by reputation, though personally their acquaintance was limited to a "How d'ye do?" at the Cosmopolitan, or a nod in the Park. He did not approve of him. Men like the captain are not of the stuff of which society gossip is made, and on which licensed scandalising journals flourish. He had never been too attentive to a married woman, or com-

promised an unmarried one, or betted largely or gambled furiously, or "protected" a music hall star, or set afloat a burlesque celebrity. No, Captain Talbot had been quite honest and honourable and self-respecting, and of such the society journalist is not the champion or exponent.

Tommy revolved his "par" and polished it carefully, in the interval between the comic dance and the contortions of two indiarubber-limbed victims to somersaults. He wondered if it would be safe to describe the episode as one of those "fashionable crazes for low-class amusements, which serve as a pick-meup to the social dram-drinking of social life."

Mrs. Carr did not perceive him. Indeed, her attention was too much occupied with the stage to wander to the shifting crowd of humanity around and below her.

When the performance had concluded with a wonderful ballet, Joan gave a sigh of relief. They all rose, and Captain Talbot piloted them through the crowd, and put them into a hansom, after bidding them good-night.

"How did you like it?" asked Mrs. Carr gaily, as they sped along the gas-lit streets.

"Not at all," said Joan frankly. "It all seemed to me so vulgar. The ballet was pretty, and the grouping rather clever, but, oh! that idiotic pas-seul! What beauty people can discern in a woman standing on the point of her toe, while every muscle of the leg supporting it is swelled almost to bursting point, and then pirouetting about like a humming-top, I can't imagine!"

"Joan," said Mrs. Carr, "I do hope you're not developing into a horrid prude. A year ago you used to enjoy things—now you only criticise them. Haven't I told you, over and over again, that you must take life as it is, and enjoy it as you can?"

"But if you can't?" said Joan, somewhat sadly.

"Then there must be something wrong, either with your liver or—your heart!" said Mrs. Carr.

#### CHAPTER IX.

MRS. CARR IS ALMOST SELF-FORGETFUL.

MRS. CARR let herself in with a latch-key, and turned into the dining-room.

The small, oval table was laid out with fruit and sandwiches and cakes, and a small spirit-stand held a silver kettle, to which she applied a match.

"I'd rather have tea than anything else, it's so refreshing," she said. "Will you have the same, Joan, or do you prefer claret and seltzer? What's the time?"

"It's half-past twelve, and I'll have some tea also," said Joan, removing her hat and the light cape she had worn.

Mrs. Carr threw her wraps on the couch, and then drew a chair up to the table and helped herself to a sandwich.

"I had so little dinner," she said; "I declare I am quite hungry."

The light from the shaded lamp fell on her handsome face, her frank eyes, the content and enjoyment of her whole expression. Joan looked at her with the wonder and admiration that she had always felt for one to whom the responsibilities and troubles of existence represented so little.

"I've enjoyed myself immensely," continued Mrs. Carr, watching the little steady flame as it burnt underneath the kettle. "It's ages since I have been to a hall. They've improved the performances immensely."

"They must have needed it badly if this was an improvement," said Joan sarcastically.

"Take a peach, or some grapes, and don't be disagreeable," laughed her aunt. "I wish I had had you earlier in the season. To-morrow's our last day, and it's a Sunday. I suppose there'll be no one at the parade now worth looking at."

Joan peeled a peach, and smiled enigmatically.

"You will go, I suppose," she said, "and Lady Kate?"

"More sarcasm. Of course, I mean the best people. Lady Kate and I are a long way removed from that. How I've worked and laboured to get into a good set, and how impossible it is—without money!"

"It is not a very lofty ambition, Aunt Bet," said the girl. "I would rather have done something by which the world was ennobled or improved, than starred in its firmament of fashion."

"That is a very beautiful sentiment, my darling," said Mrs. Carr; "but the sad truth is that society doesn't care about being ennobled or improved. It is quite content with its own proficiency. It has sufficient moral courage not to be ashamed

of any sin, unless it's found out, and to be shocked at any virtue that has only poverty to cover it."

"Lady Kate again," murmured Joan.

"No. I believe it was original; at least it was very spontaneous, and that's almost the same. After all, who is original?" She rose and poured some of the now boiling water into the little silver teapot and measured out some of her rare Souchong from a quaint, old, George IV. tea-caddy. "Everything has been said and done that can possibly be said or done. I believe Solomon's reign had a monopoly of all the good things. All that is left for poor modernity is to dress up the old marionettes in new clothes, and set them dancing to a larger orchestra than that of sackbut and psaltery and dulcimer."

"Aunt Bet," said the girl, eagerly, "you don't really mean half you say. It sounds clever and worldly and all that, but you're not heartless, and you'll never make me believe that the world has turned you into a soulless, calculating machine like those dreadful society women I have met during this past fortnight."

Mrs. Carr stooped her handsome head over the little kettle, and filled up the teapot.

"Joan," she said, "you're not of the material to make a social success. I had hoped you would be."

"Why?" asked Joan.

Mrs. Carr looked at her thoughtfully.

"When a woman's popularity is on the wane," she said, "she often bolsters it up by introducing a new attraction. I was thinking of next season."

"Aunt Bet," said the girl, "will you tell me what has given you this craze for society? It seems to me that you have developed a new character along with a new passion."

Mrs. Carr laughed softly. Then she poured out the tea into two Worcester cups, and creamed and sugared it with special care.

"Let us be confidential," she said, handing Joan her cup, and drawing her own special low chair up beside the table. "It is just like a scene at the St. James's where the 'Woman with a Past' feels irresistibly compelled to relate her history and give vent to the morbid idiosyncrasies of her nature. Look upon

me, Joan, as the 'Woman,' and I will confide to you how I won my way into society."

She sipped her tea with an enjoyment born of its own excellence, and her appreciation of effects.

"It is not easy," she began, "to conquer certain little prejudices of the world in general. You must be very clever, very rich, or very shocking to win its notice. Of course, approval doesn't count; once it does notice you, you're all right. It will always supply you with a history to suit your position, if you take it the right way. When I married Mr. Carr I had no ambition whatever. That feeling came later, when I saw that my grocer's daughter had come over to England and married into the aristocracy, and knew for a fact that Pat Mahony, who kept a public house in Dublin (now dignified into an hotel), had sent his daughters to India, and retired from business. They both married army men. Mr. Carr was not ambitious, but then he had the gout, and was twenty years older than myself. When Providence saw fit to take him to a better world, and I had designed his tombstone and composed his epitaph, I found I had grown tired of Ireland, and began to calculate my income. I found I could live in London quite as economically as I cared to do in Dublin, and a judicious use of the Vice-regal Lodge helped to place me on a certain footing. If I had been an American, things would have been easier. A past that can be traced back to an unsavoury den in the 'Bowery,' or a silver mine in Nevada, or a music hall in 'Frisco, possesses wonderful attractions for society if its present is only well gilded and unscrupulous. However, I couldn't present such sacrifices as a burnt offering on the altar of popularity, so I had to try something else. Will you have another cup?" she added suddenly.

Joan handed her empty teacup in silence. She was wondering how much of this was acting, how much true?

However, Mrs. Carr was enjoying the situation immensely. She almost regretted that her audience was so limited, and her face took an expression of chastened sorrow, and her voice a deeper note of tragedy as she went on.

"To the man who is ambitious nothing counts as an obstacle. To a woman who covets success, nothing is too insignificant to be utilised. A certain popular humorist has told us that the first step towards honours in the admiralty was the office boy's

perseverance in polishing door handles. I didn't exactly polish door handles, but I polished—wits. I made people think they were clever and brilliant, and I always kept them amused. At dinner parties especially I laid myself out to conquer. one function that is doomed if it is dull. It was terribly hard work. I have often lain awake a whole night planning a trap for a good story that seemed led up to quite naturally, and inventing epigrams that would make my neighbours oblivious of the entrées and indifferent to the charms of venison, or grouse. After a while, few dinner parties, in a certain set, of course, were considered complete without me. One afternoon I had been taken to an At Home—a man's At Home. You look surprised. Oh, I assure you they are not uncommon events in London society within the last ten years. This special one was given by a well-known man, who, in a way, was quite a celebrity. He did a great many things, artistic things, in a dilettante fashion, and was supposed to have done many others, not artistic-indeed, quite commonplace and discreditable-in a very orthodox fashion. He painted a little, and hung his sketches—at least he called them his—about his rooms. Once in half-a-dozen years he would write a novel, and the praise of society journals secured it society readers. He sang a little, too, in a cultivated and feeble voice, and passionately intense manner. He expressed himself with so much authority on matters of art and literature, that even people very much better informed than himself had no chance of saving anything in his company. He was perpetually surrounded by an admiring coterie of feeble-brained and feeble-looking youths, and rich, elderly men, who chanted his praises, and acted as chorus to his remarks. In a word, it was a new world to me, and I was intensely interested in studying it. In the course of the afternoon I found myself seated by a dowdily-dressed old lady with a clever face, and an excessively unbecoming bonnet, I made some remarks to her which appeared to amuse her immensely. We discussed modern men and manners, and the general blindness of the world at large, for the space of half an hour, and got on amazingly well. I found out before I left that she was the Marchioness of Beauley, and a very celebrated person indeed, though somewhat eccentric in her tastes. Before we parted, she had named her 'day,' and begged me to call. I let it pass, being too wise to recall myself to anyone's memory in a hurry. The next week I found her card in my hall. After that, everything was plain sailing. When Lady Beauley approved, it must be all right, and titles were scattered into my card-tray, and coroneted carriages waited at my door. Next season I was in Wilton Street, and spending a great deal more money than I could well afford. I learnt a few secrets, and utilised my knowledge discreetly. I never said an ill-natured thing when a pleasant-sounding one served my purpose. I got a reputation for wit very easily among people who were too bored, or too stupid, or too rich to be amusing. Very few English people can talk well. It is a gift they don't get from nature, and can't acquire by art.

"Men began to talk about me at the clubs, and women in their drawing-rooms. I dressed well, and was seen everywhere where there was a crowd. There are as many 'sets' in society as there are layers in puff paste. I was not too ambitious, and variety pleased me more than exclusiveness. I have tried several of the 'layers.' Some were as brittle and unsubstantial as the paste they resembled. Still, my success was undoubted, and more easily achieved than I had anticipated."

"And now?" asked Joan, quietly.

Mrs. Carr laughed.

"Well, now," she said, "I'm in a bit of a fix. I've outrun the constable at last, and must really consider ways and means for the future. Society is very charming, but its charms are expensive; and when it finds you have only conquered it by audacity, and not dollars, it has no hesitation about turning its back on you."

"And you have gone through all this wear and tear of mind and body, only to win such a result at last?" said Joan.

"Oh, it will be all right," said Mrs. Carr. "Something is sure to turn up. I'll go into retreat, as the Ritualists say, and economise for a few months. Besides, one can always borrow. I've never done it yet, because nothing frightens men off like asking them to lend you money without an equivalent. I sometimes think, if the worst comes to the worst, that I'll marry again. An old man, with a good income, would suit me very well."

Joan's fair young face flushed hotly.

"In all this," she said, "I don't seem to recognise you—your real self—at all; not the frank, generous, clean-souled Aunt Bet I have idealized so long, have loved so dearly."

Mrs. Carr rose, and pushed aside the chair with a sudden impatience.

"You irritate me, child, when you talk like that!" she said. "For Heaven's sake, don't idealize any man or woman! I did it once——" She paused.

Through the open window a long, wavering line of moon-light fell across the floor and played with the gathering shadows. The circle of light in which they stood grew dim as the lamplight waned. The scent of the flowers on the table mingled with the fragrance of the tea. Again the thought crossed Mrs. Carr that there was something scenic and theatrical about the scene, and again that odd desire to pour out feeling into words seized her.

It is this slavery to emotion that makes women unsafe confidants.

"Yes," she went on, hurriedly, "I did it once, Joan. If it would help you, warn you, almost I feel tempted to tell you of that early folly."

Joan looked at her wonderingly.

- "I should like to hear," she said. "Your voice has grown natural at last. Is this your real self now?"
- "My real self is buried in the grave of that folly I spoke of. You have never known it, Joan. No one has ever known it but——"
  - "One man?" questioned Joan, softly.

The lamp flickered unsteadily, and then they stood in sudden darkness, with only that wavering line of moonlight playing across the floor.

"What am I saying? What are we doing?" exclaimed Mrs. Carr suddenly. "It is Sunday morning already! Come, Joan, we have talked enough. Let us go to bed."

"Are you not going to finish that story?"

" No!"

She spoke sharply and decisively, and struck a match and lit the candles left on the adjacent sideboard. Then she crossed to the window, and shut and fastened it, and drew the blind down with nervous haste.

"I hate to see the moonlight creeping in like that," she exclaimed. "There's something ghostly and uncanny about it."

Joan looked at her, puzzled and half pained by this sudden withdrawal of confidence. It struck her then that the Mrs. Carr that society knew was a somewhat different person from the Mrs. Carr who had shut out the moonlight as if it were a foe she hated and feared.

# CHAPTER X.

#### THE CHURCH VERSUS THE WORLD.

JOAN slept badly that night.

She was perplexed by her aunt's strange admissions, and that half-veiled mystery at which she had been allowed to glance.

The "Woman with a Past" theory appeared utterly unsuited to any conception of Mrs. Carr. Sorrow and suffering seemed alike to have passed her by.

Emotional she had always been, but "tear and smile" were in close fellowship with any passing grief, and emotion is, after all, very characteristic of her race and sex. Her life had always seemed, in Joan's memory, a boisterous, vivacious, turbulent sort of existence. A thing of many changes and many friendships, but it had never worn a mourning aspect for any person or event, or hinted at any hidden trouble that romance might have coloured, and girlhood excused.

That sudden drawing aside of the curtain had excited the girl's curiosity immensely, and had given her the key to an utterly unsuspected mystery. She wondered if that arrested confidence would ever be renewed; if she should ever hear the story hinted at in those brief words: "My real self is buried in the grave of that folly I spoke of. No one ever has known it!"

Was that true? Had no one ever really known the *real* self that was so popular, and seemed so well known?

It was very perplexing and very uncomfortable, and Joan's sleep was haunted during its brief unrest by visions of skeletons opening cupboards and rattling keys, and generally behaving in an unorthodox and melodramatic fashion, worthy only of the dreams of Eugene Aram.

It occurred to her once that Mrs. Carr might have been

romancing for her own amusement, and also a little because of her love for "scenic effects." The whole thing had been so strange, so abrupt, so unlike any previous memory of confidence that it was no wonder she was perplexed.

Towards morning she fell asleep, and was only awakened by the sound of many church bells, calling the attention of devout communicants to the importance of Early Celebration.

She remembered, with some degree of pleasure, that it would be her last Sunday in town for several months, and rose and dressed and went into the sunny morning-room with a little pleasurable anticipation.

Mrs. Carr bustled in a few moments afterwards. Neither her face nor manner betrayed the least memory of the little scene the previous evening.

' She was full of details of packing and the fitting-in of trains, and the arrival of a particularly smart travelling gown which had been sent home the night before.

"I do like a woman to look smart and trim when she starts or arrives," she said, as she helped Joan to some omelette. "Thank Heaven! the French have shamed Englishwomen out of that habit of keeping their old, shabby gowns for travelling. A dozen years ago we were a living disgrace. No wonder we were laughed at all over the Continent. To this day a badly-dressed woman, or one with an abnormally huge 'bun,' is popularly supposed to be English. A Nice paper last winter remarked that whenever an untidy head or a very hideous hat were seen they were put down immediately as 'Panglaise.' It is the same at Boulogne, or Paris, or Trouville. We seem to send our worst specimens abroad, whatever we do with our best."

"I' think," said Joan, "that Englishwomen have not the coquettish instinct of the French. It is not so much the dress, as the way it is put on, that distinguishes a French person. Hats and bonnets also. An English girl fixes her hat on as securely as if it were a covering instead of merely a framework for her face."

"And not one in fifty knows how to arrange a veil," said Mrs. Carr. "It is either pulled so tightly over the nose that it makes smiling an injudicious experiment, and a cold fatal, or flies wildly about like a signal of distress. But the one great reason, I fancy, why Englishwomen are so devoid of style, and have

degenerated into mere copyists, is that the men don't interest themselves in the matter. A Frenchman of any class wouldn't walk out with his wife, or daughter or sweetheart, if she were not in a suitable toilette. An Englishman never knows what his womankind have on, except that it's something black, or white, or red, as the case may be. He has no subtle instinct for colour or suitability, no perception of nuances, no appreciation of effect, unless it is very outré or unsuitable."

"Captain Talbot, for instance," said Joan, smiling.

"Oh—he!" Mrs. Carr shrugged her shapely shoulders. "I gave him up long ago as hopeless. I believe he does know black from white, but it's impossible to make him understand that there is a difference between a bonnet and a hat. He reminds me of a man who was told that sisters generally dressed alike, and whenever he saw two women in the same coloured gowns would insist that they were sisters. He mixed up some very odd relationships in his time."

"What church are you going to?" asked Joan presently.

"Oh, St. Athanasius's, of course! That is the only one any person with self-respect could be seen at now. You'll find most of our friends of yesterday there, multiplied by a few of the "ultra smarts," who think that postures mean devotion, and a fashionable preacher religion. Our world is a beautiful satire on Christianity, Joan."

"It is a satire on most things good and simple," said the girl, sadly, as she rose from the table. "Do you feed Dickie on Sunday, Aunt Bet," she asked suddenly; "or would it be sacrilegious?"

"Oh, I have no prejudices," said Mrs. Carr, briskly. "Come into my room when you've done, and I'll show you my travelling gown before I put on my bonnet."

The girl went over to the window and threw the crumbs out to Dickie and his friends, who saw no more reason for objecting to food because Church bells were sounding than did their more enlightened human benefactors.

The sun was warm, though veiled by soft grey clouds, and the peace and silence in the usually noisy street struck her as strangely pleasant. She lingered there so long that there was only time to put on her hat before starting for the ultra-ritualistic edifice, which represented old-fashioned doctrines in a fashion-

able and highly emotional form, such as appealed to the tastes, if it did not benefit the souls of fin-de-siècle Christians. As the vestments were very gorgeous, the priests very numerous and the music very Romanesque, and the service utterly unlike what had originally been intended by its compilers, the worshippers were greatly edified, and turned out afterwards in rustling and highly decorative throngs to carry their useless prayer books and spiritual feelings to church parade.

The offertory bag represented any sense of moral penitence for the sins and shortcomings of the week, and they went forth cheered and refreshed to hear the latest scandal, and repeat the latest canard, and criticise the dernier cri in bonnets, and abuse their dressmakers, and make appointments for Goodwood and Cowes with that delightful sense of "duty done" that is at once so distinctive and admirable of Christian society.

They had washed the outside of all their cups and platters for a week to come. The process had been public, and therefore efficient for all moral purposes. With the inside of the receptacles no one had anything to do. If a few dregs remained behind, or a stain or two lingered persistently at the bottom, they were not required to be shown to the general gaze. The world is lenient to rich sinners, and the Church follows its example. It is quite content with outward observances, and never puts too great pressure on its children. It has spared the rod so often in consideration of after benefits, that it is little marvel if the spoiled child mocks at its feeble attempts at authority, and despises its advice in later years.

Mrs. Carr and Joan turned into the Park, and then walked slowly under the trees to that one spot which Society had declared to be the only place where it could show itself on the Seventh Day, and had sanctified by a season of Sunday gowns, fresh from the incense of a fashionable service.

It might have occurred to the ordinary mundane mind of an unfashionable person that there was not much novelty in seeing the same faces that had appeared at every social gathering of the season; in chattering the same senseless small talk, and whispering the same licensed scandals, and boring each other with the same vapid compliments. But the mind of Society is not ordinary—very much the reverse—and its views of enjoy-

ment are altogether too fearful and wonderful for the comprehension of human beings who are not smart, not intolerably rich, and have only common, useful, every-day red blood in their veins, instead of that cerulean-tinted fluid which distinguishes a limited aristocracy.

So though they all had seen each other yesterday, and would see each other again to-morrow and many following "tomorrows," they expressed general delight at the meeting, and gave invitations for lunch, and admired each other's pet dogs, and agreed that town was getting unbearable.

Mrs. Carr knew so many people, and seemed so much in request, that it did not surprise Joan to find herself going to lunch with the Marchioness of Beauley instead of returning to the flat in Sloane Street.

She had met that lady once or twice, but had not as yet been invited to her house, which was in Rutland Gate. Mrs. Carr's description of Lady Beauley as a dowdily-dressed person; with a clever face and somewhat eccentric tastes, was a very correct one. She was usually one of the worst-dressed women in society, and as much attached to black as Her Majesty herself. But she could trace back her descent from the Conquest in a clear, unbroken line, and had a place of historical interest in Buckinghamshire, to which only the very best people were ever invited.

Perhaps it was to make up for the exclusiveness of her house parties that Lady Beauley unbent so freely when in town, and lavished invitations on any class that could amuse or entertain her.

She hated dulness, and though she had to make many sacrifices to the proprieties, she managed to amuse herself in a fashion that made her prim and unmarried daughter, the Lady Christiana, shudder with horror.

The Lady Christiana was the eldest of three daughters, and having seen her two younger sisters married and well established, had taken up severe views of life, and developed a tendency towards missionaries and missions and other good and useful works, which amply occupied her time, and relieved her mother of her society.

Joan found her in the drawing-room when Mrs. Carr and herself were announced, and was greeted with that sour glance of disapprobation which confirmed old maidenhood feels bound to bestow on its younger and more favoured sisters. Lady Christiana summed up the beautiful Irish girl as "worldly," and then gave her attention to a meek and bald-headed curate who officiated at the church she patronised, which was "low" in its ritual, and unfashionable in its neighbourhood.

There were about half-a-dozen people in the room, which was huge and ugly, and furnished by an upholsterer's taste, to all appearance.

Lady Beauley came in without her bonnet, and with her grey hair plainly braided and surmounted by a cap modelled on the plan of Mrs. Gladstone's, of whom she was an ardent admirer.

Then they all went down to luncheon in the great, dreary dining-room, where everything was in a massive and past century style. The meal itself was well appointed and unpretentious. Almost every dish was cold, to suit the prejudices of Lady Christiana, who always insisted on as many of the servants going to church as could possibly be spared, and had sittings for them at St. Boniface's, where they were under her own eye, and obliged to give account of absence or inattention, or a frivolous tendency towards becoming bonnets and the proximity of footmen. Lady Christiana was one of those excessively good and pious people who make life generally uncomfortable for everyone who has anything to do with them. No one liked her, but everyone was in awe of her and her temper, which was less Christian-like than her principles. She could make things so excessively unpleasant at home, that her mother always felt thankful when her scruples prevented her appearing at purely worldly entertainments, or she would take herself off on long visits to church dignitaries, at whose country houses she was a welcome guest.

Joan sat quietly observant at luncheon, saying very little, though nothing escaped the notice of her brilliant eyes. Mrs. Carr, undeterred even by the severe glances of Lady Christiana, chattered fluently and smoothly as was her wont, and as she sat next to an English judge of the Probate and Divorce Court, who was a very clever and very caustic personage indeed, she enjoyed herself amazingly. She secured several "tips" as to forthcoming cases before the legal dignitary was aware of his self-betrayal,

and kept him so amused and so delighted that he forgave the poorness of the sherry, and the omission of olives.

"And what do you think of your brief glimpse of London life?" asked Lady Beauley of Joan, who sat beside her. "It is your first, is it not?"

"Yes," said the girl, glancing up from the *mayonnaise* on her plate. "I seem to have done a great deal, and seen a great deal, and—missed a great deal."

"Ah," said Lady Beauley, "that cuts both ways. But I'll only take it that you came on the scene at the tag end of the season. I am sorry I did not know you sooner. And you are really going away to-morrow?"

"Yes; and I am ungrateful enough to be glad. I love the country."

"So do I—when I'm not in it," observed Lady Beauley. "If it didn't almost always rain, and if there were a little more variety about the scenery, and if one's gardeners would not send all one's best fruit to London, and insist on making one's flower beds into geometrical problems, and if there weren't so many cows, and one wasn't bothered about politics and Sunday schools and poorhouses, and obliged to walk to church by way of example—really, the country would be quite delightful!"

Joan laughed irresistibly.

"Our ideas of country life differ considerably, Lady Beauley," she said. "I love it for its freedom and unrestraint, its freshness and beauty. I love to get up at dawn and see the sun rise over the hills, and hear the first songs of the birds; to go down to the sea and swim; to take a boat and sail far out from land, and be alone with the gulls and waves. I——"

She stopped abruptly. Lady Beauley's keen eyes were fixed on her face with some wonder and a good deal of amusement.

"You like all these things," she said, "and you are Mrs. Carr's niece. Why, she is a *mondaine* to her finger tips. How do you get on?"

"Admirably," said Joan, with a quiet smile. "The Irish nature is a many-sided one, you know, Lady Beauley."

She nodded.

"I know; and a very charming one, too. It has the capacity for enjoying life, and contrasts don't alarm it."

She looked across at Mrs. Carr, who was assuring the judge

that there wasn't the least bit of truth in a certain *petite histoire* that had lately come to the ears of society, and in which several great names were implicated in a perfectly indiscreet fashion.

"I never knew anyone like her," went on Lady Beauley, her still bright eyes twinkling merrily over many memories of Mrs. Carr. "She never seems tired, or wearied, or out of temper. She is the most good-natured woman in the world, and the best company. She gets on with everyone. It is marvellous. It is genius in a way. She never makes an enemy, even in society where everyone is more or less antagonistic. She always looks perfectly content and perfectly happy. To be with her is like having a bath of sunshine while drinking a bottle of champagne."

"Yes, she is very entertaining" said Joan, remembering that

"Yes, she is very entertaining," said Joan, remembering that history of the previous night, and the use to which Lady Beauley herself had been put, and of which she seemed utterly unconscious.

"Never a care in the world—nothing to trouble her—rich—free—independent!" murmured the marchioness, enviously, with a glance at her own "thorn in the flesh," who was advising the curate of many shortcomings in his doctrines, and pouring into his ears the rigorous views of her own special religion which had entirely eliminated such trifles as forbearance and compassion, and kept its self-alloyed charity for its own purposes.

"Lady Christiana does a great deal of good, does she not?" inquired Joan, following the glance, and refusing patisserie at the same moment.

"I believe so," said Lady Christiana's mother, somewhat grimly.

"She is much interested in Church work and foreign missions."

"I often wonder why we set so much store on foreign missions," said Joan. "A few home ones might be carried out with advantage. Some of the lower classes in England are the most brutalised savages in creation. Their faces, language and appearance are a living discredit, and their actions make newspapers loath-some reading."

"Especially Sunday newspapers," chuckled Lady Beauley. "They seem to skim the cream of the slums for the delectation of Seventh-Day readers. The police news reporters must have their hands full to supply them. I think, however," she added, as she put down her glass, "that our home missionaries wouldn't

find it quite so easy a task to make converts in the slums and alleys as they do in foreign lands. You can't ram Christianity down the throats of English savages as you can down the gullets of benighted infidels. The former have an awkward knack of asking questions, and comparing theory with practices. It is not pleasant for the zealous missionary."

"Are you speaking about missionaries?" inquired Lady Christiana, suddenly.

She had caught the last word, and her ears were pricked as are the ears of the war horse at sound of trumpet-call.

Lady Beauley cast a hurried glance around, and collecting eyes by sheer force of the desperate situation into which she had drifted, rose from the table and swept them all away in her train to the drawing-room.

## CHAPTER XI.

## SUNDRY VIRTUES AND VICES.

"Do stay for half an hour's chat," said Lady Beauley to Mrs. Carr as she turned from "speeding parting guests." Joan and her aunt were the last, and had risen to make their adieux in their turn. "It will be ages before I see you again," went on the marchioness, "and I haven't had a word alone with you yet."

Mrs. Carr seated herself again. She liked Lady Beauley, who had been very useful to her; besides, Mrs. Carr's golden rule of popularity was to be pleasant to everyone, and always sacrifice herself in small matters. To seem to enjoy any person's society, and smile unweariedly during their entertainments is to pay them a high compliment of appreciation. Hostesses like smiles, and to see everyone good-tempered and amused is to feel a pleasant glow of satisfaction with yourself as entertainer. Social life is a series of equivalents. Some pay in one coin, some in another. Mrs. Carr's coinage had been the compliment of enjoying every social function to which she was invited, and the bringing of her bright smiles and her high spirits perpetually before the givers of such functions. It has been wisely remarked that to find everyone acceptable to you is to make yourself acceptable to everyone. Mrs. Carr had approved of that philosophy sufficiently to copy it. To her nothing was little, and no one was unimportant. She remembered the future sufficiently to lay up an account to her credit, and was as gay and as gracious to the small fry who came in her way, as to the larger fish for whom she had angled.

"It is very good of you to say that, dear Lady Beauley," she said, as she took the big, cushioned chair to which her hostess pointed, and ran over in rapid review the various topics likely to amuse that lady. "One likes to be missed, even for a few months."

"Oh! one can't help missing you," remarked Lady Beauley.
"I envy you your spirits. How do you manage to enjoy everything so! I wish I could. By the way, have you heard that that little affaire is off between Lady Golightly and Archie Vassilis? Romance and money market, I always called them. I thought it couldn't last."

Mrs. Carr gave a rapid glance at Joan, but she was looking out at the Park, and did not seem to hear.

- "Is it really?" she said. "I thought she would never let him go, she was so desperately jealous."
- "A woman's a fool to show a man she cares for him, especially in public," said Lady Beauley.
- "I thought it was all up with her when I saw her cross the room and arrange his tie before her husband's very nose. Of course he couldn't stand that—an actor, too."
- "But such an actor," said Mrs. Carr. "A genius and an artist if ever there was one on the stage; and so adorably handsome."
- "Well, it's over at last. They had a fearful row—husband insulted him at the club, I believe. Now Lady Golightly has gone to Switzerland for change of air, and Sir Mark to look after some mines in Africa. Very bad form to make a scandal like that."
- "And after trying so hard to get into society," observed Mrs. Carr, with sympathy.
- "Yes; she was a clever woman, and finance did a good dead for her. Besides, she had a brazen soul, and never knew when she received a snub. It was a pity she lost her head over Vassilis."
- "And she had a tower of strength in her husband. He never seemed to see how she carried on, or to object to it either."
  - "Ah! they arrange these things better in France," said Lady

Beauley. "Englishwomen have so little tact. They are so used to being considered cold, that when they do lose their hearts they lose their heads also, and in the pride of succumbing to a real grande passion, invite all the world to look on at its progress and their own downfall. They are perfect ostriches in the way of hiding their own heads, and fancying no one sees them. It is so unwise. After all, respectability is so easy and so safe, there is no excuse for anyone making a scandal."

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Carr, "the novelty of finding one really does possess a heart is an excuse for displaying its weakness. It must come as a surprise to many women."

"I don't know what doctors are about," went on Lady Beauley.
"They ought to be able to regulate our hearts as well as our livers. Why shouldn't there be medicines and diet for the emotional side of the system, just as there are for the physical?"

"So there are!" laughed Mrs. Carr. "But we make them up for ourselves, and dispense them on the principle of 'a hair of the dog that bit us."

Lady Beauley's eyes turned to Joan's absorbed face.

"A charge?" she asked, meaningly.

A faint wave of colour swept over Mrs. Carr's cheek.

"No," she said. "I have no special responsibility. We are the best of friends and companions."

"She is very handsome. You ought to marry her well," said the marchioness in a low voice.

"Oh! I have not thought about that," said Mrs. Carr, with the candour of unveracity. "She is very unlike most girls—has strong opinions—and prejudices."

"She told me she adored the country."

"So she does. I said she was unlike most girls."

"You should have brought her out earlier in the season. The young Marquis of Crewe is a great friend of mine. I would have introduced them. He adores everything Irish, and you know how rich he is! Just attained his majority."

"Society marriages are generally unhappy," said Mrs. Carr. "I have no ambition for Joan in that way. I suppose you won't believe me, but it is really true. You see this is no case of noblesse oblige. She can please herself, and I am very sure she will."

"But how dangerous!" exclaimed Lady Beauley, who had

married her own daughters on true society principles, and would have married off other people's also for them, if they had allowed it.

She believed thoroughly in the rules and obligations of the matrimonial market, by which the fair virgins of society are bought and sold as shamelessly as the wares of Bilingsgate.

It was almost a shock to find that Mrs. Carr did not share the same opinion. But then she told herself that lady had never possessed three plain, unamiable daughters with small jointures and a great deal of blue blood in their veins.

"How very dangerous!" she went on. "Young girls are quite unfit to decide for themselves about a suitable marriage. They fall in love with a handsome face or a flattering tongue, and believe that all life is to consist of relays of moonlight and kisses served to order, or inclination. They wake from romance to reality and find that a husband is a very different being to a lover—that he can swear as well as whisper vows, that his smiles are for anyone out of his house rather than in it. That he is always grumbling about the food or the bills, or the noise of the children, and that moonlight and kisses had better be relegated to the background of their own memory. Oh, my dear, you surely would never be so unwise as to let a girl, in whom you had any interest, choose a husband for herself!"

Mrs. Carr laughed softly.

"Joan has no illusions," she said. "I am not afraid of her choosing unwisely, and though romance is a bad beginning for married life, society shows us daily that it is a worse ending. What your own husband does not give you, some other man may. It is more dangerous to discover conjugal virtues in other women's husbands, than to miss them in one's own."

"Ah, I am a practical person," said the marchioness; "I speak of men as I have found them; and a precious bad lot they are, my dear, between ourselves."

Joan glanced back into the room at last. She had grown tired of watching the 'bus traffic winding towards Piccadilly, and the loungers in the Park, and the gaudily-frocked children making holiday on the grass, what time their parents lay about under the trees, or talked of shop profits and neighbourly misfortunes, with an eye on "Martha Jane," or "Billy," or "Bob," as the case might be.

"Come here, my dear," said the marchioness. "Your aunt and I are wicked, worldly people, and have been discussing the sins of our neighbours with the additional zest of Sunday virtue. If my daughter were here I should not have dared to do it. She keeps me in severe order. I suppose she has gone to afternoon service as she has not returned to the room. I hope I shall see a great deal of you next season. I am really quite sorry you did not come up in May; but doubtless you will enjoy London more next year when you have grown tired of country dulness."

"Oh, we shall have plenty of fun where we are going," said Mrs. Carr. "I hear there is quite decent society to be found, and Joan and I are never dull together."

She looked fondly at the girl, and for a moment Lady Beauley's sharp glance scrutinised the two handsome faces critically and half enviously.

"They really seem fond of each other," she thought, "and they are both so handsome, and one is just at the age to remind the other of what she was . . . and what she has lost. It is really very surprising."

She dropped her long-handled glasses, and rang for some tea, and insisted on the two Irishwomen remaining to have some also.

"There will be a host of curates, or missionaries, or some such people in presently," she said, "and I shall feel so *out* of it. The only religion that interests me is the religion of the Future."

"And what is that?" asked Joan.

"It has not yet been decided, my dear, which makes it so interesting to discuss even if one learns nothing. It seems to be a mixture of Æsthetic Evolution, and Theosophic Buddhism."

"It has been evolved from the past," observed Mrs. Carr, "and is to go on evolving in the future. Its results in the present have not extended our experience very much, or improved our morality very materially."

"Then what is the use of it?" asked Joan.

"Oh, it gives us something to talk about," said Lady Beauley. "And even scandal has limitations. And it gets us acquainted with scientific men like Professor Crank, who is always ready to show us biological experiments when we go to a meeting at Mr.

Arrarat's. He is the great exponent of the new religion, and has written one or two marvellous books about it, which no one can understand. And he has adepts and chelas, and all sorts of delightful black people at his house, and they go about in their astral bodies, and leave mysterious letters which are supposed to come from Thibet, and are messages from the masters who live there."

"It sounds very extraordinary," said Joan. "I have read of Theosophy, of course, but I didn't know it was anything like your description, Lady Beauley."

"Oh, your aunt and I were at several meetings and discussions of the society," said Lady Beauley, pouring out some tea which the footman had just brought in. "We enjoyed it very much."

"Especially the discussions," said Mrs. Carr. "Do you recollect the funny man, who always upset them all by asking the most extraordinary questions, and turning all the theories and doctrines into ridicule in the gravest manner possible. I wonder what has become of him?"

"Turned yogi, I suppose," said Lady Beauley. "He was very anxious to get on a more advanced plane, and went out to India a few months ago—Himalayas, I believe. It is surprising how much occult knowledge can be gained in the Himalayas!"

"Yes," said Mrs. Carr, gravely, though her eyes were dancing with merriment, "and other knowledge too. There is a great area for evolving emotions and sensations, and imbibing philosophy in the mountain districts of India. You cannot limit the potentialities of any law—human or natural—in such inaccessible regions."

The marchioness chuckled audibly.

"You and I, my dear," she said, "are very hopeless subjects for occult development. We are too worldly. Besides, as I told that dear Mr. Arrarat, there seemed to me something almost improper in the idea of going about in one's *linga sharira*."

"What on earth is that?" inquired Joan.

"It is the ethereal duplicate of our real body," said Mrs. Carr. "I believe it is far more beautiful, and can be ejected into space, and travel about in perfect freedom, and without any of the restraints of physical life on the lower plane. You must

study the subject, my dear. I have heaps of books, including Madam Blavatsky's *Isis*, which I never could read, and any amount of pamphlets published by the society for the instruction of members."

"But you don't seem to have derived much instruction from either the society, or the literature," remarked Joan.

"No," said Lady Beauley, "we were not of the right principles to evolve or improve ourselves. And although I dote on Oriental religions and customs, they are apt to become tiresome, if studied too closely. So when the season really commenced, I gave up going to the meetings, and used to ask Mr. Arrarat, or any new Guru or Chela, who was staying with him, to luncheon. They always came, and really, for such wonderful beings, ate and drank just like ordinary folk. I think they have given up trying to convert me now, but I always send in my subscriptions regularly."

"It was a very convenient sort of religion," observed Mrs. Carr; "you were not obliged to have any sectarian prejudices whatever, and it didn't really matter what you did, if only your motive for doing it was good. That made things so pleasant, because one's motives are always better than one's actions—at least mine are."

"That means a new code of morals, as well as a new religion." said Joan. "No, thank you, no more tea," as Lady Beauley took her cup.

"And we really must be going," exclaimed Mrs. Carr, putting down hers and rising from her chair, "it has been delightful, but then I always do enjoy a chat with you, Lady Beauley. Spare me a thought now and then in my exile, will you?—and I hope we shall see each other next season."

"And it's positively 'Good-bye'?" asked Lady Beauley, taking the extended hand. "I am really sorry. As for you, my dear," she added, turning to Joan, "you must come and see me whenever you return to town. I promise to make the season pleasant for you. The country is all very well, but in London one hears the pulse of life beat to the tune of wider and higher interests."

(To be continued.)

## A Little About Manitoba.

BY CUTHBERT MACKENZIE MIALL.

THE horses stood impatiently pawing the snow, and the strings of bells on their harness jingled fitfully as we climbed into the sleigh, and drew the furs round us. At the word they sprang forward willingly. In a minute we had crossed the drifts filling the gateway, and the cutter was skimming along the track that led to the bush, now showing as a dark line ahead of us.

It was a bright moonlight night, and it seemed all the brighter because the ground was deeply covered with snow that had lain for many a month. It was cold too—cold as only a northern climate can be—cold and still.

We passed into the bush, and merrily did the sleigh-bells ring as the horses trotted swiftly through the woods. Now we were driving through a cutting in the forest barely wide enough for the cutter to pass between the dark, leafless trees standing up so tall and straight on either side. Overhead shone a narrow strip of moonlit sky, with the black, frozen boughs showing out stiff and clear against the light far above us, like a delicate fringe of pencil strokes. Now we passed into some little clearing with the dark shade of the surrounding bush glooming in ghost-like contrast to the whiteness of the snow over which we were speeding.

Again the bush closed in, and the track in front and behind shone in a clear white line between the two walls of dark trees, through which it had been cut. Now we crossed the path of some bush fire that had roared its way through the woods, leaving in its wake little else but blackened stumps, and here and there a blasted poplar, rearing its weird form and lifeless branches to the sky, as though to intensify the desolation of the scene. And then once more we plunged into the darkness of the woods.

Mile after mile, in the keen, keen frost, we sped along that smooth white track between the trees. But at last the bush was left behind, and we were moving rapidly across a stretch of prairie. Snow, snow, nothing but snow; with just two narrow

tracks that the numbers of sleighs had beaten out across the waste. There was a grandeur in the silent gloom of the woods, with the light streak of sky far above, and the white line of road stretching away ahead and behind till a turn of the track between the trees hid it from sight. But here all was a desolate waste—nothing but snow; no sign of man, or life. We were alone on that white stretching plain.

But no! Away to the left the chilly moonlight shone on a dark grey form standing motionless on a drift of snow. With his sharp ears forward, his head raised, and his long bushy tail drooping behind, silently the wolf watched us as we passed.

"And this," I thought, "is Manitoba. This is what they call in England, 'Farming in Manitoba.'"

Six months later, I cantered across the prairie in search of a herd of cattle. The quick hoof made no sound on the close green sward, and the rush of air was refreshing after the sultry-heat of the day. The afternoon sun was shining brightly from the West, and his rays, more golden now he had sunk from his noonday height, gave a beautiful warmth to the landscape. How rich were the shades of colour in those clumps of "bush" and "bluffs" of trees, how fresh the green of the grass around them! And how joyful was the evensong of the countless-birds that warbled and piped from every bough. Beyond the copses lay a flat, stretching prairie, with here and there a patch of barren, salty ground, and in the distance a huge bog, its withered moss as yellow as the autumn stubble.

My eye caught a distant string of coloured specks, and before long my broncho had carried me up to the herd. I turned the cattle, and drove them towards the old homestead with the clump of straw-roofed buildings, and the little white-washed log house, gleaming brightly in the sunlight.

As my horse paced slowly home behind the cattle that were vainly switching their tails to drive away the tormenting flies, all seemed beautiful to the eye. Blue bells and red lilies speckled the more fertile parts of the plain, and wild roses thrust their pink petals from every bush. The little yellow canaries chirped cheerfully as they flitted from place to place, while brilliantly-coloured moths, and large shining dragon-flies fluttered through the air. But countless swarms of mosquitoes

rose from the long, luxuriant grass of every little hollow to worry and bite both man and beast; and the air between the gently rustling trees was thick with fiercely-stinging flies.

"And this," I thought again, "this is what they call 'Farm-

ing in Manitoba.'"

I vividly remember the first farm that I ever saw in Manitoba, and the impression that it gave me.

It was in the fall of the year, that about four o'clock one afternoon I found myself seated in a high, springless waggon, being jolted along Main Street, Winnipeg, bound for a settlement some 35 miles north of the capital. Half-a-mile past the track of the Canadian Pacific Railway we turned off the graded road, and struck a trail across the prairie. For many a mile we trotted along the smooth black trail, with the flat uninteresting prairie stretching away on either side, like a limitless plain of faded yellow.

The city grew smaller and smaller behind us, till it looked nothing more than a long, dark point on the horizon, spiked with the points of some tall church spires, and a haze of dim smoke above. From the Arctic North a piercing wind swept across the plain, and fresh from the warmth of a sunnier region, I felt chilled to the bone. But on we jogged till, at length, we saw ahead of us a great penitentiary standing on a steep hill that rose straight out of the prairie with cliff and ravine, like an island rock in the ocean. Near here stood a square barn-like wooden building—our half-way house. But the sun had set before we hurried the horses into a long dark stable, and clattered shivering into the hotel.

In a bare and (except for a few wooden chairs) unfurnished room we found a small group of men gathered with pipe and cigar, round an iron grating in the floor from which a column of heated air was rising, and into which they perseveringly spat. We warmed ourselves with something from a glass, discussed the price of wheat, and the approach of winter, and then went into supper.

Two hours later we were rattling along the hard frozen road, and scarcely more interesting than the prairie did it seem. It was as flat and bare as ever, though in places the moonlight showed a stretch of yellow stubble, or a tiny white house in the

distance. Colder and stiffer I became each mile, till at last we "struck the settlement." Here the houses were thicker and the prairie had been mostly turned into cultivated land. Moreover, a black line of bush had been for some time showing on the left.

We turned off the travelling road and, crossing a culvert, our smoking, tired team drew us slowly up the lane leading to the farm. As we approached I examined with no little interest the little log-house that was not only the first I had seen, but was destined to be my home for many months. And totally different it was to what I had always fancied such a habitation would appear.

Instead of a cosy, rustic little hut nestling among the trees, I saw, by the chilly moonlight, an angular white building of the hardest outlines, and without a trace of rural beauty. From one of the windows (which reminded me most unromantically of the painted squares intended to represent light-giving casements on toy "Dutch farms") a light was streaming, and, as we drew near, I saw a woman standing at the door. In perfect silence we took the proffered lantern from her hands, and passed on to the stables.

The horses tended and fed, numbed with cold we made our way to the house. As I closed the door behind me, with an Englishman's instinct my eye wandered round the kitchen for the blazing hearth before which I could warm myself. It was a plain square room, whitewashed on the inside as on the out. At the table the woman was laying a meal; in a corner stood a cupboard, and a few hard chairs were ranged round the room. But the blazing hearth was missing, and in its place an iron stove was set in the centre of the floor, like a black box without chink or crevice through which a spark could be seen.

My first impression of a Western homestead was disappointing, and I believe that it usually is so to an Englishman fresh from other lands. In a surprisingly short time, however, I became used to the differences between my new life and my old, and as I learned more about the climate and conditions of the country, I saw the reasons for many things that at first I had wondered at.

The fact is that the vast majority of newcomers to Manitoba and the "North West"—whether they be bona-fide emigrants

or chance travellers like myself—have exceedingly erroneous ideas about the country and Canadian life, and are quite unprepared for what they have to encounter. Nor is this in any way surprising when we consider the very scanty sources of information within the reach of most "old country" people.

Some incomers feel wise in the possession of odd scraps of information culled from the letters sent home by their friends, sons or brothers, consisting chiefly of disconnected facts of no great importance, and not very true descriptions of particular localities. Others depend on various books of travel, written by men who have "done" the country, and are anxious to turn such knowledge as they have obtained, into readable matter of a description most likely to interest the average public and therefore to meet with some publisher's approval. But with the exception of such as these and some few better-informed persons the train-loads of emigrants (for the most part farmers, labourers and the like) that from time to time reach Winnipeg and Brandon, are relying almost entirely on the promises and arguments of emigration agents.

These great relievers of the over-crowded European cities are sent out from Canada by the Dominion Government, the Canadian Pacific Railway, and various land and other companies, to all of whose interest it is to encourage immigration. It being the object and policy of these bodies and their representatives to bring out settlers to take up land, pay taxes and freight dues and assist the growth of the country, it is only natural that they should represent it in as attractive a light as possible. Nor do they hesitate to offer every inducement in their power or to make the most of the natural advantages of the country in order to tempt men and women of every description to leave their native lands and make new homes across the sea. And to maintain and increase the annual influx of immigrants large sums of money are spent in land in Canada in general and her Western provinces in particular.

He would be bold indeed who would venture to deny the great advantages that emigration brings to both the mother country and the colony, and were it within my province to discuss the subject, I should hesitate to actually censure the methods by which the stream of immigrants is encouraged and maintained. The honesty of these methods is frequently

questioned, but I will not go further than to say that it is not fair (and this opinion is held by every disinterested individual who has personal knowledge of the subject) to induce people to leave their homes and friends by painting the advantages of the country in the most vivid colours, hiding at the same time the sterner aspects of the case. And following a more upright policy would seem wiser than allowing every mail to carry out of the colony, the complaints and regrets that spring from discontent and disappointment to deter others from following the perhaps, after all, wise example of these deceived emigrants.

I have seen and talked to immigrants on their arrival, and after they have remained in the country long enough to see and learn for themselves, and I know the bitter disappointments and hardships many of them are forced to suffer, and the feelings with which they regard those by whose agency they were persuaded to give up their homes and leave their native lands. Seeing them come, as they frequently do, without money enough to buy food for more than a few weeks, and often (in the case of Germans, Swedes, etc.) without knowledge of the English language, it is difficult to refrain from forming an opinion on the subject somewhat different to that held by men who sit behind escritoirs in the private rooms of an office.

In Manitoba, however, as in most colonies, there are more openings and greater opportunities for any man willing to work, than in the older and more crowded countries. Beyond the ordinary vocations necessary to every town a year seldom passes without high wages being paid on some railway, government survey, or big contract. But being primarily an agricultural country, it is the farm that claims the first importance in the affairs of Manitoba, and it is the life on a farm that is of most interest to English readers.

In most respects so totally different to what one is accustomed to see in England the life on a farm or ranch out on the stretching prairie or deep in the tangled bush of the great. North West presents many interesting features.

According to the authority of most historians, the first explorer to reach the present site of Winnipeg at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, was the celebrated French traveller La Verandrye, who penetrated the interior as far as this point in 1732. It has, indeed, been maintained by some

that French explorers and missionaries had visited the region as early as 1666, but the assertion is open to considerable dispute.

In these early days the "North West" was nothing more than the field for the enterprise of fur traders whose journeys extended to points at great distance south and west of the ports on Hudson's Bay. At first the trade was carried on by individuals, but these proved to be only the forerunners of two great fur companies, whose bitter rivalry was for some time carried to disgraceful lengths. In 1670, with an easy disregard of the legal difficulties attaching to the disposal of what did not belong to him, somewhat characteristic of his family, King Charles II. granted a Royal Charter to the Hudson Bay Company, ceding to that body an enormous territory of most vaguely-defined limits to which, in honour of the first president, Prince Rupert, was given the name Rupert's Land. between the Hudson Bay Company and its great French rival, the North West Company, of Montreal, that the struggle for ascendency took place. The fierce competition was accompanied by much hostility and considerable bloodshed, only brought to a close by the amalgamation of the two companies, under the name of the former, in 1821.

The agents of these companies were the first Europeans to travel on the trails of the Indian tribes through the wild interior of the North West, but the honour of founding a colony of peaceful settlers, from whose energy and perseverance the province of Manitoba has sprung, is due to the Earl of Selkirk, a philanthropic Scotch nobleman, who, desiring to rescue some of his humbler countrymen from their poverty and distress, induced a number of families to emigrate across the Atlantic.

The first party of settlers was taken to Prince Edward Island, and, so successful did the experiment prove, that in 1812 a large expedition of Highlanders, with some Irish Celts among their number, set sail from Scotland to found a colony on the banks of the Red River. The hardships and disappointments endured by these early settlers, to whose number a second contingent was added a few years later, read like the adventures of fiction. The fearful severity of the weather, the hostility of the Indians, and the culpable carelessness and mismanagement by which the colonists were left without the promised aid and supplies on which they

were depending, make us marvel how these hardy Scotchmen could ever found a settlement to grow into so large and prosperous a community as is at present in existence.

It seemed as if the fates were all working against them. No sooner had they, at the cost of infinite hardship, privation and danger, cultivated a large enough area of land to place them beyond the pale of actual want, than plagues of grasshoppers for two successive years swept away their crops and left them, not only without bread, but also without grain enough for new seed. Then, when, after another period of famine and distress, they had recovered the lost ground, the Red River overflowed its banks, and, with the most disastrous flood ever known in the country, demolished all vestiges of the farms along its banks. In a few short days houses, cattle and crops, the existence of which represented so many years of toil and suffering, were all swept away before the eyes of the ill-fated people, who, homeless and destitute, huddled together on the higher ridge and knolls still remaining above water.

But at length hard-won success crowned the heroic efforts of these resolute pioneers, and a flourishing colony became established. As the fame of its fertile soil spread and grew, new settlers appeared in the country, and the steady stream of immigration that at first flowed up the creeks and trails of the historical Dawson's route, when diverted to the line of the Canadian Pacific Railway, increased with such astonishing rapidity that the original Red River Settlement of Lord Selkirk's time was soon no more than a small portion of the colony.

In 1870, after a period of disturbance and rebellion, the province, under its present name, was admitted into the confederation of states known as the Dominion of Canada. The census of 1891 declared the population to be over 150,000, with a capital that has grown from a lonely swamp by which in 1870 225 people had their abode, to a handsome city of 35,000 inhabitants.

Manitoba lies on about the same parallels of latitude as England but, owing to its great distance from the sea, and the absence of any such friendly institution as the Gulf Stream, its climate is very different. The summer is hotter and dryer than in Great Britain, and the winter far colder. The difference between the seasons, moreover, being much greater the year is

naturally divided into two parts, the summer being devoted almost entirely to the sowing, tending and gathering of crops, and the winter to such other work as can best be performed during the cold season.

In the beginning of November, usually about the 9th or 10th, the "freeze up," as it is called, takes place, and from then till the following spring the snow never melts, and the frost lies deep in the ground. The thaw usually occurs early in April, and the spring—a season of much mud and water—fills the interval between the end of the snow and the advent of the mosquitoes, which make their unwelcome appearance during May. The summer, which may be characterised as a season of heat and flies, continues until September, when the frosts at night announce the fall of the year, and the approach of another winter.

The winter is exceedingly severe—more so perhaps than in any other part of the globe populated to any great extent by the white race of men. For five months in the year the ground is covered with snow, and everything is frozen stiff and hard. It is only this steady continuance of the cold, however, and the dryness of the climate that makes it possible to endure the intense frosts that from time to time prevail. During the three middle months of the winter, it is an exception for the thermometer to rise above zero, even in the middle of the day, and during the "cold spells" it frequently falls to 30° or 35° below zero (Far.). Mercury, as is well known, freezes at 39° below zero (Far.) and it is no very unusual thing to find the quicksilver solid in the bulb.

Surprising as these figures may appear, so far from being exaggerated, they do not represent the extreme cold that one is sometimes forced to endure. On one occasion (the coldest frost I have ever experienced) my second thermometer, a fairly reliable instrument (alcohol, of course, the mercury being frozen) fell to 57° below zero (Far.) or 89° of frost. This temperature, which is almost as cold as ever takes place, was taken before sunrise in an open field, half a mile from the bush. I may mention that the best thermometer in the nearest village on the same morning registered 58° below zero.

With temperature such as these it is of course necessary to take proper precautions against the frost, and any carelessness in this respect makes it extremely dangerous. Many a morning in the winter you can look out of the frosted windows and see a bright sun shining from a pale blue, cloudless sky, and the pure white snow sparkling in the rays. What a lovely morning it seems—so bright and still, so calm and beautiful! The country as far as the eye can reach is lying in perfect peace—not a quiver among the stiffened trees, not a sign of life or movement. Above the horizon of yonder prairie the mirage has raised into the whitened belt of the lower sky a delicate scrap of distant land-scape—a pretty bluff of trees rising out of some bush and shrubs. The scene makes you wish to walk abroad. Go out into the sunshine. The air is keen and clear, and at first it will not strike you as being very cold. But go and look at the thermometer—40° below zero, perhaps. Walk but a quarter of a mile without a proper winter cap and your ears will be frozen stiff enough to break off like biscuits.

The danger of being frozen is, in fact, the worst feature of these low temperatures. A stiffening feeling is first experienced, soon followed by a short, sharp, pinching pain. If this warning is neglected and the frost allowed to do its work no further pain will be felt; for, indeed, the part affected will at once lose all power of sensation. But the tiny white spot in the ruddy skin will, if not checked by warmth, go on growing larger and larger, until the restoration of circulation cannot be properly effected. If not left too long, all danger can be avoided by rubbing out the frost with snow, or with the naked hand, but a blister, like that left by a burn, will remain; and if the frost has been allowed to spread over a large part of the face, for instance, this will be no light matter.

When lost in a storm, or a long distance from any shelter, it is frequently a man's fate to lose his hands or feet, or to be frozen to death. And a little carelessness has often maimed some poor fellow for life.

It is a curious fact, however, that none of the shivering feeling so common in a winter like that of England, is felt in this dry steady cold. The feeling of being chilled to the marrow is not experienced in the really cold weather; but in place of that most unpleasant sensation there is another, equally disagreeable—a numbed stiffness, often amounting to actual pain.

The dress necessary to ward off the frost is somewhat peculiar, and would look startling on a fashion plate. Huge fur coats

are worn, the hair being on the outside, loose enough for two men, and with the collar rising above the head and covering most of the face. A cap of fur is also needed, reaching down to the eyes and below the ears. As the fingers would speedily freeze in ordinary gloves, two pairs of mits are worn, an under one of wool, and an outer of leather, fashioned like those sometimes worn by babies—with a place for the thumb, but no separate divisions for the fingers.

The best kind of foot-wear for the winter is copied from the Indians. This is a kind of sock made out of soft buck-skin (moccasins by name), and while large enough for several pairs of thick woollen socks to be worn inside, is soft enough to allow plenty of movement in the feet, which would speedily get cold in harder boots. With nothing but his nose peeping out of his cap and big hairy coat, and his hands encased in large clumsy mits, a man looks more like a bear on its hind legs than a human being.

If dressed after this fashion the cold need not be greatly feared, and the winter is certainly a surprisingly healthy season, and not unpleasant for the most part. Towards the latter part, however, the season of blizzards sets in. A few comparatively mild forerunners often take place earlier in the winter, but it is in February that the settler usually makes the acquaintance of a real "Manitoba blow."

It is very soon discovered that sixty or seventy degrees of frost on a still day is not so hard to endure as even a slight wind with a less severe temperature. But when the wind rises to a fierce hurricane during the great cold, it is almost impossible to keep oneself from freezing even for a few minutes. Sweeping over the plains in its ungoverned fury, the gale gathers up the loose snow and drives it in vast white clouds across the land. Then in addition to the pinching pain of the frost, the face is stung by the whirling grains of frozen snow like the prick of so many thousand needles.

To be caught in such a storm while crossing the prairie is an experience requiring no repetition. The track is in a very short time drifted level with the snow, and, if the horses once lose the hard road, it is 100 to 1 against reaching shelter till the hurricane abates.

The air is filled with the driving snow as with a fog, and it is

often impossible to see the horses' ears. Cowering down to escape the full violence of the storm the unfortunate driver in such a case leaves his horses to find their own way, if they can, and devotes himself to rubbing out the frost from his cheeks, watching the while for any tilt of the sleigh that might warn him that the runners were leaving the track.

If once the road is lost he must either turn his horses loose, and try to find his way on foot or tie them to the sleigh and wait for the weather to clear. In any case he runs great risk of losing the use of some of his limbs, and perhaps of meeting his death lying stiff and cold in the snow.

I may here recount an experience of my own that will serve to show how easy it is to go astray in a storm. About to return home, after having drawn a load of grain into town on the previous day, I was warned that a storm was brewing, and that I must make good time to escape it. I had myself seen the ill-boding sun-dogs in the East that morning, but hoped to reach home before the storm that they foretold should make its unwelcome appearance.

After getting clear of the city I found that the warning was no vain word, but, by forcing the pace, I succeeded in covering the most open part of my journey before the rising blizzard had gained much power. I was still many miles from home, however, when the full force of the hurricane of wind and snow was driving right in my face. For an hour or more I crouched down in the sleigh, longing to reach a house, and looking out every now and again to see if possible whether any team was still forcing its way along the right road. On through the darkness and the stinging whirl of snow we toiled till suddenly the horses stopped dead. As I climbed stiffly out of the sleigh, during a momentary lull in the blast my ears caught the sound of a fiddle, and walking to the horses' heads, I found, to my astonishment, that they were standing with their noses against a stable wall.

Guided by the sound of scraping music I stumbled through the drifts to the house, and, covered with snow, broke abruptly in upon a private rehearsal of an approaching dance. Never did the untuneful scraping of an ill-played fiddle sound less grating to my ears than as in response to a shouted welcome I crossed the room and stood before the stove, while two jolly lads forsook their buxom partners to run out and stable my team.

It turned out on the following day that, all unconscious of where I was going, I must have passed over two fences that the high wind and severe cold had covered with hard drifts of snow, and the horses, finding a sleigh track on which my worthy host had been drawing manure into the middle of the field, had followed it up to the stable.

At such times as these, when the man is away, the lot of the woman is a hard one. It is not difficult to picture her waiting and praying for her husband's return.

Two days ago perhaps she saw him drive away wrapped in his buffalo coat, and perched on a high load of grain. By the light of the sinking moon she had watched him moving along the road; the sleigh, team and driver were lost to sight; and then she had turned from the window to clear away the remains of his hasty meal, and sat down to sew and knit till the streaks of early dawn reminded her of daily duties to be done.

Last night she had waited and watched for his coming in vain. And to-night she is straining her ears to catch the sound of the horses' bells. A dozen times she starts to her feet at a fancied tinkle in the howling of the storm; and each time she runs to the door, and stands in the icy blast peering into the darkness till the pinch of her skin tells the tale of the frost.

The children are peacefully sleeping and she listens to the even sound of their breath as her busy needle works away. And her anxious woman's mind pictures her husband fighting his way through the storm, or lost on the trackless prairie and calling in vain for aid, or thrown from the sleigh by a runaway team, or lying cold and stiff in the snow and frost.

Then suddenly, perhaps, the door opens, a rush of cold air howls into the room, and a man's figure enters, hidden in frost-whitened furs. She suppresses the half-uttered cry of welcome and busies herself with his meal while her husband silently throws off his coat. In silence he seats himself at the stove, rubs warmth into his numbed fingers, and pulls long icicles from his moustache.

"The supper is ready," she says.

He nods, but never a word does he utter.

And often it is not till the warmth of the food has driven the

cold from his body that a man will speak. But the wife will understand, and she is far too wise to trouble him till he has recovered from the exposure and frost.

Often I have seen the long, low sleigh pass the house in the dim starlight with a stiff figure on the seat all covered with frost like a man of snow, and the team as white as himself. And I have run out to "unhitch" the horses with the frost so keen that if the naked fingers touch a buckle or hook the skin will freeze to the metal before they can be removed. Many a mile have they travelled over those roads of snow, and as I loose the harness they try to rub the long icicles off their noses against my coat. And then when I have made my way back to the house, there sits their cold teamster, close to the stove, pulling the ice off his beard. Man and horse share the cold alike.

But driving in the winter time is by no means to be put down as all hardship. On the contrary, when the roads are good and the weather not too cold, there is a great deal of pleasure to be found in a cutter with a good horse or pair. A cutter is a light sleigh made with runners about an inch wide in most cases, and a seat to hold two persons. On a good hard road, when the mercury is not standing too low, a horse can scarcely feel its weight behind him, so easily will it travel. The light, sliding motion of the sleigh and the quick rush of the keen air combine to make a short drive pleasant and exhilarating. Now skimming over the prairie, now speeding past brush and shrub, or gliding rapidly between the trees in the woods, the distances seem short, and a good deal of running about the country can be done. But if the weather is very cold even a short drive is too long for pleasure. I have driven in a cutter on nights when the quicksilver was frozen in the thermometer, and on one occasion nearly shared the same fate. Repeatedly drawing my naked hand out of the mits to rub the frost out of my face, my fingers got so cold that I became afraid of losing them, and yet to leave the stiff white patch on my cheeks was out of the question.

Fortunately an expedient suggested itself. I had been driving for some miles at the top of my horse's speed, and he was already far warmer than was good for him. I pulled up and sprang out of the cutter. Then brushing the frost off the

hairs with the sleeve of my coat, I pressed my frozen cheek to his sweating flanks. The warmth of his body had the desired effect, and by quickly rubbing my skin dry with a scarf, I prevented the moisture of his body turning into ice upon my face. I reached my destination none the worse for the incident, though for some time my beauty was marred by the large black marks and blisters that always appear after the flesh has been at all badly frozen.

"Bob-sleighs" as distinguished from "jumpers," which merely consist of a body, or box laid on two runners, are built with four runners in two pairs coupled together. The runners are usually about six feet in length with a three-foot guage, and the coupling acts, like the lock on a carriage, to enable the sleigh to turn easily. These bob-sleighs are used for almost all purposes: on the farm, in the bush, and for travelling on the roads. The runners are two inches, or a little more, in width, and on soft, or ill-packed roads, will not sink like the narrow runners of the cutter, which would not be wide enough to carry a load. The bottoms of the runners are shod with steel to make them slip easily, and to save them from wear, but in hard frosts the metal seems to stick to the snow and make the draught considerably greater.

It should be here explained, for the benefit of the uninitiated, that except in the streets of a town, the snow instead of being travelled on all over the road is only beaten down in one part. Thus one sleigh follows another, and the runners pack down two parallel tracks as hard and slippery as ice. A pair of horses, driven abreast and known as a "team," is always used with bob-sleighs, each horse being placed in front of a runner, and consequently treading on the hard track made by the passage of previous sleighs. With cutters one horse is often used, and in these cases the shafts are so placed as to allow of the horse trotting not opposite the centre of the sleigh, but on the track of the near side runner, an arrangement that looks at first sight somewhat one-sided.

In the beginning of the winter the roads will be smooth and level, and sleighing is then at its best. On a warm day (comparatively speaking) the runners will slip so easily over the snow that a team can draw as much as it is safe to load up on a sleigh, and trot with it too, and a good horse will carry a cutter

along in splendid style. But when the snow gets deep, and the blizzards begin to raise drifts, sleighing becomes quite a different affair.

The tracks will then be like two walls of hard packed snow, three or four feet high and perhaps a foot wide, with loose snow between and on either side. So long as horses and sleigh are moving on the top of these two walls like a train upon its rails all goes well; but unfortunately this is not always the case. For the settler has not got far into his first winter before he makes the acquaintance of those breaks in the road known as "cuts." These are usually caused by careless driving or by the snow drifting up one side of the track and thus tilting up the sleigh; and on roads not much used, and therefore not well packed, a heavy load will frequently break through the track. Many of these cuts will occur all through the winter, but a good teamster will not find much difficulty until towards the end of the sleighing, when the sun gets powerful enough to soften the snow. The roads will then cut up and break away until it is impossible to drive a high load without an occasional upset. The horses may be on these walls, but the sleigh will go sliding off them. cutting its way right down to the ground, and tipping up to such an angle that nobody can tell when it will turn upside down.

At such times as these, good driving alone can save a spill. It is often quite a sight to watch a string of teams making their way along such a road. Now they go plunging one after another into deep cuts, with the loads piled up on one side to keep the sleigh balanced, if possible, when one runner is two or three feet higher than the other. Now the teamsters draw their horses across the track, trying to work the sleighs up to the hard snow on the top of the slides. Sometimes they succeed, and sometimes the whole sleigh will slide along sideways, the front runners drawn up to the top of the slides, and the hind runners cutting away in the snow at the bottom. But every now and then one of the sleighs, load and all, goes rolling over.

This winter driving, or "teaming," as it is termed, requires a large amount of skill. It is surprising what a difference clever driving will make on a bad piece of road; and it is equally surprising how some men become good teamsters, while others seem quite incapable of keeping a sleigh the right way up. A good teamster uses the "lines," as reins are always called in

Canada, as little as possible and trains his horses to obey his voice. Thus, with a well-taught team a man can make each horse act as he wishes irrespective of the other, and holds a great advantage over another teamster who can only move his horses together by the reins. A great deal of talking to the horses is done, but the whip is very seldom seen, a fact that speaks well for the intelligence of horse owners in Manitoba.

The subject of horses is one of the greatest importance to a Canadian farmer. Some years ago the Clydesdale came to the front, and was highly esteemed in many quarters on account of his great strength, but a reaction has set in, and this stamp of horse is rapidly losing favour throughout the country. It is now generally agreed that a heavy horse of this class is too slow and cumbersome for the work required of it, and lighter, smarter breeds are rapidly replacing it. To extract itself from snow drifts up to the belly, to obey its driver quickly in bad cuts, to work in deep snow and among fallen trees and stumps in the bush, or slash through mud, water and swamp in the wet season of the year requires an animal of a totally different breed.

An ordinary farm horse, moreover, is expected to cover much greater distances and at a better pace than is the case in England, forty miles in a day not being anything unusual. His duties, too, are more various. In addition to the work on the farm itself, the drawing of grain and produce and the winter work in the bush, he is frequently needed between the shafts of a buggy or a cutter, or to herd and chase cattle on the prairie.

Every man is obliged to break his own colts, just as he has to shoe his own horse, but of course, in the latter case, he has to visit the blacksmith when a new set of shoes is required. Owing to the judicious precaution of tying them up at an early age, a large amount of trouble is saved in training young horses. All through the long winter the foals and colts stand in the stable like old horses, and thus become so used to being handled that they are usually quiet enough when the time for breaking arrives.

The harness is then put straight on to a colt, and without more ado, he is "hitched up" to the sleigh with an old horse for a mate, and forced to work whether he likes it or not. And it is surprising how little trouble most of the youngsters give. But of course it must be remembered that the majority of the horses

are of a much quieter race than those out of which an English breaker makes his largest hauls.

The severe cold in the winter, strange to say, does not appear to affect horses to any serious extent if they are properly attended to. In fact the animals are usually in better health and condition during that part of the year than in the summer.

Horses and oxen are now almost exclusively used throughout the province, and even the latter are to be seen in much smaller quantities than formerly. This however, was not always the case. Not more than twenty years ago a toboggan drawn by a string of dogs was a far more common sight than a team and sleigh in many parts of the country, now extensively settled on and cultivated. On all the surveys on the railroad track when the Canadian Pacific was being built and at every lumber shanty in the woods it was by this means that stores, provisions and many of the less bulky kinds of goods were conveyed. Every old settler can tell of the times when Indians and half-breeds were to be seen driving their dogs at full speed through the bush, shooting between trees and dodging round stumps where a sleigh could not pass at all.

At the present time a string of dogs is seldom seen, except on Lake Winnipeg or among the Indian and Hudson Bay traders in the far north. But any one wishing to try this means of transit can purchase the whole outfit at the cost of a few dollars; and the pleasure and convenience will soon repay him. With a toboggan ten feet in length and eighteen inches wide, and three good dogs, it would not be difficult to cover a hundred miles a day at the rate of about fifteen miles an hour. A ride behind a string of dogs is as delightful as exciting. Lying on the narrow board forming the toboggan, one appears, being so near the ground, to be flying over the snow at a terrific pace. And on the narrow trails in the bush the speed at which one shaves past the trees is at first rather alarming, but the dogs will never leave the track, be it ever so slight.

The Indians and traders will run behind a loaded toboggan all day and think nothing of travelling sixty or seventy miles a day. But on such occasions as I have gone out with dogs I have contented myself with a run of a mile or so every now and then when cold, holding on to a string attached to the back of the toboggan.

Some of the dogs are very savage, and an old trader can always be identified by the scars on his hands left by the fierce bites of his dogs. The animals indeed can scarcely be expected to exhibit much love for their masters. Harnessed up in the morning they are driven all day with a whip that makes them yell with pain and can flick off their hair like dust. At night they are tied up outside in the cold and snow, and some fish or meat flung to them to fight over. It is indeed the "life of a dog."

But, though for drawing loads horses have replaced dogs throughout the settled parts of the country, every boy "hitches up" the cattle dog to some little hand sleigh he has made and jumping on to his "rig," whacks his collie into a gallop. And in every town the small vendors of newspapers and message boys fly along the streets in the same manner.

The winter is seldom far advanced before the farmer (except of course in those parts where prairie lies on every side and no timber is available) sallies forth into the bush with axe and sleigh. Along a winding track between the trees he drives his team, till he reaches some clearing where he means to cut his load; or perhaps he must hew his own road through saplings and bush. But he is no longer a farmer, it is a woodman whose eye is running over the trees to select a suitable bluff. At last he ties his horses to a stump and drawing off his fur coat, strides through the snow with the axe across his shoulder.

The straight tall trees stand out of the snow thick and close on every side stretching up to the sky, the bare frozen boughs that no wind can rustle. All is still and hushed, except when a chirping squirrel runs out of his hiding place to frisk about in the snow, the occasional jingle of the horse's bells, and perhaps the scream of an owl from some distant stump. At times the silence is intense, and almost deathlike, the silence that great cold seems alone to give.

Then suddenly clear and sharp the stroke of an axe rings out and goes echoing through the woods. Another and another, quick and clear the notes resound among the trees and merrily are the white chips flying from the swinging axe. A large notch has now been cut, nearly as deep as the trunk is thick. The woodman moves round the tree, and as his axe goes biting deep into the narrow strip of grain that now alone connects the

tree with its roots, he glances up to see the topmost twigs trembling against the sky. Another stroke—the boughs are shaking and the stem appears to totter. Once more the cold sunlight catches the gleam of the axe swinging home a last true stroke. The tall tree sways for an instant. Then, bowing its lordly crest, with a loudening whirr the stately growth of timber measures its hundred feet above the snow. Well may the poets sing of the charms of the woodman's craft:

"How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke."

The axeman walks along the fallen stem and cleaning off the branches cuts up logs to the sizes he wants. And then, when enough has been felled, the sleigh is loaded and once more the horse's bells are ringing as the woodman drives home through the trees.

It is splendid work, and a fine manly exercise to swing an axe in the woods. On those cold clear days no better work can be wished for. Even in the most intense frost, coats are flung off and fur caps pushed back from the brows. The snow, even if it be above the knees, is clean and dry, and the exercise is as healthy as it is invigorating.

The winter is said to be the time of greatest hardship, but in the opinion of one who has worked as hard and as steadily as any man during every season of the year, and "roughed it" too, like the rest, it is by no means the bugbear it is generally considered.

The great cold of course involves a certain amount of inconvenience, if not suffering, but it is questionable whether this is greater or even as great as the torment of the flies in the summer. The invigorating exercise of work in the keen, bracing air cannot but be healthy. The gliding motion of the sleigh, during a short rapid drive along those smooth glassy roads of snow is a frequent source of pleasure. The sparkling beauty of the frosty woods and white-mantled country, and the winter sun shining brightly from the pale sky of the fine, cloudless days that make up by far the greater part of the winter are considerations not to be ignored.

At night the whole sky, beautiful with the brightness of the stars, is made far more lovely by the glorious zones and streamers of that queen of midnight beauties, the Northern Lights.

Sometimes only a pale segment of the Aurora lies calm and transparent to the north. Sometimes bright rays and streams shoot up and across the sky from the frozen Arctic north, with here and there a quickly fading and brightening cloud of light. And sometimes the whole vault of heaven is ablaze with the full flashing splendour of this truly wonderful phenomenon. such nights only enough of the sky is visible to serve as a background and show up the glories of the Aurora—the exquisite clouds of phosphorescent light now gleaming in full magnificence, now paling and fading into nothing only to shine out again with renewed light of as great or greater intensity; the marvellous shimmering curves, streamers and shooting rays of electric brightness that flash across the sky, already dappled with waving, trembling light, and disappear from the sight to be replaced by others. On rare occasions, too, the pink hue that sometimes shows in the Northern Lights will deepen into red and suffuse the whole sky. The spectacle is then even more wonderful and glorious, for the alternate hues of red and pale phosphorescent light change so quickly, yet mix with each other so gradually, as to dazzle the eyes with the beauty of their shivering light.

In the winter time the comforts of a home are more fully appreciated than at any other season of the year. Even though the home be but a log shanty in the lonely bush, a greater amount of enjoyment may be experienced on a long winter evening in such an abode with 70° of frost outside and a good supply of firewood inside, than in a luxurious dwelling place in a more civilised country, and under more favourable climatic conditions. Though the house may not measure more than twenty feet square, the walls be only roughly-hewn logs, the ornaments little more than a gun or two, some pots and pans, and various coats and skins, and the furniture of the most simple kind, it is difficult to understand that one can feel surprisingly contented, after fighting against the most strenuous attacks of Jack Frost out on a bleak expanse of snow, to draw up a chair near the stove and watch the curls of blue smoke ascend slowly from a well-worn pipe! And all the more cosy and home-like does it seem when the wolves can be heard outside howling dismally as they slink across the snow.

These animals, though their voices are none of the sweetest, are very different to the Russian wolves, about which so many tales

of adventures are told. In some parts of Canada large numbers of what are called "timber" wolves are to be found, which are as dangerous, or nearly so, as their brethren in the Old World. But in Manitoba itself, or, at any rate, in the settled parts, they are seldom seen, the creatures whose wild voices so frequently disturb the night air being a smaller and far less troublesome kind, known as "prairie" wolves.

They never hunt in large packs, and if disturbed by men, always prefer flight to battle. They can snarl and show their teeth, and if escape is cut off can use them too, but, so watchful and clever are they, that it is exceedingly difficult to drive them to bay. During the day they usually hunt singly, but in the evening several of them will often join together to serenade a house with their howling and screeching, sometimes continuing their concert until dawn.

Though these wolves do not attack men they are not of a very timid disposition. They often stand by the roadside and howl at you as you drive past. Sometimes a bold fellow will run along for miles like a dog, a short distance in front or behind, or even stand in the path and look at you until the horse is quite close. In the autumn they appear to be more bold and numerous than at any other time, and will make foraging expeditions to the hen house in broad daylight. I have even known them drive the dogs away from the house, and howl and snarl under the very windows half the night. Their depredations on the fowls, sheep and even calves, have earned for them the enmity of man, and in most years a bounty is offered by the government for their slaughter. But they are not easy to kill, as they will often run for miles after being wounded, and if there is any bush near they will, if possible, make their escape by plunging into the thickest parts, where it is hardest to track them. On the prairie, however, no better sport can be desired than trying to ride them down with a horse, or shoot them with a revolver as they double away from under the hoofs.

The winter is the season of various festivities of a somewhat rustic nature. The dances are perhaps the prime attraction, and the number of people that a small log-house can be forced to contain upon such occasions is indeed surprising. But however severe the crush, the greatest good humour invariably prevails, so long as the fiddles and feet keep going; and there is at every

well-managed dance plenty of whisky for those who want it, and often a fight or two before the sleighs go jingling home the next morning.

But as giving a dance involves a certain amount of expense, the generous host usually recoups himself (and sometimes makes a considerable gain) by inviting his friends to come with their teams and draw home a set of building logs from the bush, or some such thing, or by holding a shooting match at which a number of men pay twenty-five cents each to shoot at a target set up in the snow, with a few lean geese or turkeys as prizes, the marksmen steadying their aim by not infrequent potions of well-watered whisky.

The population of Manitoba is made up of various nationalities. More settlers are drawn from Scotch and English families than any other race, but the Irish are not far behind. The majority of the older settlers once held land in Ontario or Lower Canada, from whence they migrated to the Western Province, of which so much was heard. But now almost all the immigrants come direct from Europe—Germany, Sweden, Denmark and other Continental nations, now sending an annually-increasing proportion. There are also Mennonite and Icelandic settlements growing up in various quarters.

As a rule farmers and settlers are very hospitable both to their friends and to strangers, but in anything like money or business matters they place their own interests—and who can blame them?—a long way before those of others. Many old-fashioned words and customs still linger among the descendants of early settlers, and in dialects the variety is very great. But over both language and customs the American influence has made itself felt, and in addition to the Yankee style of their dress, the Manitobans "guess" and nasally bet their lives and their dollars in nearer imitation of Uncle Sam perhaps than in any other part of Canada.

On Sundays the school-houses are turned into churches, and the settlers turn out, if it be winter, in their cutters and sleighs, or if summer, in their wagons and buggies. The ladies are politely lifted out of the "rigs" by the brawny arms of their fathers, husbands, or lovers, and modestly leave the gentlemen to themselves. These, on summer days, after tying up their horses to trees or posts, gather in groups and nod their

broad felt hats over the topics most interesting to their sex until the preacher rides up on his broncho. When the frost of winter precludes these gatherings, horses are stowed away in the stable, which is usually to be found at every church and school house, and after covering them with the buffalo skins and furs from the sleighs, their masters collect round the stove inside and joke while the women folk obligingly sit out of the way.

When the preacher has removed his huge fur coat and pulled the icicles off his beard a hymn is given out, and led by the more musical of those present, the congregation sing their praises. Preaching over, the horses are once more harnessed, and when their drivers have picked up the female passengers from whom, for inexplicable notions of etiquette, they have up till then carefully remained apart, the sleighs go jingling home again by the light of the shimmering Aurora.

The country is naturally divided into two parts: the prairie land and the districts in, or within reach of, the bush. This distinction involves important differences. The prairie, in the first place, is far more easily cultivated or "broken," as it is termed. "Breaking" means ploughing up the prairie sod for the first time. This is usually done about two inches deep in the month of June. After it has lain about two months the sod becomes decomposed and is then ready for "back setting," or ploughing over again. This time the plough is run from four to five inches deep, so that in addition to the old sod, two or three inches of loose soil is turned up; and the land is then ready for seed in the following spring. In the bush land far more work is involved. Trees must be felled and removed, the brush and scrub cut and burned, and the larger stumps grubbed out of the ground. And then in many cases six horses can scarcely force the heavy breaking plough through the soil. The ground, moreover, is left full of roots and small stumps which must be harrowed out in the following spring, and will not be really free of these remnants of the once standing timber for many years after the first cultivation.

The advantage, however, of being near the bush is held by some to outweigh these obstacles to quick breaking. For, where growing timber is near at hand, to build a house or a stable or to make a fence the settler has merely to go out into the bush with his axe and sleigh and draw home all the logs he may require;

while in the prairie districts sawn timber must be bought at a considerable outlay. And the difference of cost in obtaining fuel for the winter is just the difference between buying coal at perhaps eighteen or twenty shillings a ton and felling trees in the woods.

On account of the large amount of time and labour required to clear and break bushland for cultivation, the prairie land has attracted a far larger proportion of incoming settlers who can then in much less time prepare and put under crop a considerable acreage on their homesteads. But on the vast treeless plains which form so well-known a feature of the North American continent, the danger of having his whole crop dried out for want of rain is ever threatening ruin to the farmer, who may any year see the result of so much labour in preparing and sowing his fields nothing more than a little thin short straw with a few shrunken ears too poor to replace the good seed he had sown, and often too worthless to pay the cost of cutting. Near the bush, and near any of the lakes droughts are rare, and the older heads will always relate how where water and bush are in the vicinity, good crops have been harvested, while whole districts of more open land have been ruined by those two most dreaded things-frost and hail.

There is however plenty of first-class land in the transition state, where the open prairie is broken by patches of small bushes and copses of little trees known as "bluffs." In the summer the sylvan beauty of this style of scenery is extremely pleasant to the eye. That pleasure given by the sight of nature unsullied by the work of man can be appreciated to the fullest extent in a canter round these bluffs, when the cool of evening has replaced the heat of the day. The twitter of the birds, the gentle rustle of the trees, and the soft beat of the horses' feet on the short green sward are the only sounds that break the stillness of the air as the golden sun sinks slowly in the west. Round a fine bluff of straight-growing poplar, filled in by hazel and briar, past some little saplings of sturdy young oak, and across a strip of level turf to another close copse of rustling green, where a turn of the wrist is needed to guide the horse clear of a clump of silver willows-no one with any love of nature can fail to feel a calm happiness. A fringe of wild flowers surrounds each of these tiny woods that are dotted about like the islands on a lake, and

here and there a bright stretch of sunflowers adds a blaze of yellow to the varied tints of green. And now and again the loud whirr of some startled grouse cannot but stir the most apathetic of sportsmen.

And beneath the little green knolls, and pleasant rustling bluffs, lies as fine a soil as can be found in any quarter of the globe. The clay subsoil is covered with a deep black loam of the richest and most fruitful description. Reports and statistics tell the bushels of grain in totals and averages, that are grown each year; geologists explain the history of the soil; and experts descant on its chemical properties and draw comparisons between the American fertile belt and the black earth of Central Russia. But less learned beings have only to walk through the wheat fields, and watch the startling pace at which trees, plants and weeds spring up and increase in stature in order to appreciate the productive qualities of the soil.

As the winter wears away and the vernal equinox approaches the danger of snow-blindness makes itself felt. It is supposed that at this time of the year the increased warmth of the sun makes the snow in some way more dazzling, but leaving such questions for the decision of scientists, the fact remains that towards spring the eyes are more affected by the whiteness of the ground than during any other part of the winter. blindness usually comes over the eyes suddenly, and one is most liable to feel it after passing out of a warm house into the cold air outside. But men walking along the road will sometimes become partially or even totally blind for the time being, and in their efforts to reach a house run great danger of getting lost and probably in consequence, frozen to death. These, cases are fortunately not common, but a large number of people suffer from weakness in the eyes at this time of the year, and call it rightly or wrongly, "a touch of snow-blindness." Though never smitten with this affliction myself. I have felt that dazzled sensation, so often experienced after a fall of new snow, become suddenly so great that everything seemed to be disappearing into a vast fog.

After the country has been covered with snow for five months, the first patches of bare ground that appear through the dreary mantle of white are a welcome relief to the eyes, and a happy augury for the future. But the period of "thawing out" and

"drying up," intermediate between winter and summer, is not a pleasant one. Every ditch and "creek" in the country is full or overflowing, and the fields are broken by ponds and streams of water. Then as the frost which during the winter has forced its way several feet deep comes out of the ground, the mud becomes so soft and copious that roads and lanes are almost impassable. The greatest care must be exercised to prevent one sinking till mud and water are pouring over the tops of the highest boots, and indeed where the land is sticky, that the footwear be not left behind like a stranded ship. Almost the only means of travelling at such times is on horseback, for it must be remembered that the roads are for the most part little more than geographical marks, and anything approaching the English macadam is quite unknown. Moreover, with water across the track, bridges broken down by the torrents and culverts floated away by the floods, even when sitting sixteen hands above the ground the traveller cannot always count himself safe from a wetting.

Wild ducks, geese and cranes follow quickly upon the retreat of the snow, and the long silence of the winter is soon broken by the chirp and song of busy birds. The trees whose branches have been for so long bare and cold, break out into bud, the gopher leaves his burrow to sit and bask in the sun, and the snakes are once more to be seen gliding through the grass.

Then as soon as the land becomes dry enough, every horse, man and boy goes forth into the fields to plough, harrow and sow. Man, beast and bird are all so busy that time slips rapidly by and the snow seems hardly to have melted before Midsummer is at hand.

All is now green and sunny. The trees in the woods and bluffs are in full leaf, and the grass is growing long and luxuriant. From every bush and branch comes the sound of birds, and on the prairie are the tinkling sounds of cow-bells, as the herds move slowly along the pasture; the roads are lined with flowers, and the children are out with their pails gathering stores of wild berries.

Nature has lavished her most beautiful effects in adorning the country a short time ago so cold and desolate. But one fault mars the enjoyment of the otherwise beautiful summer. As the warmth of May grows into the heat of June there come to life

countless myriads of flies of various kinds, to the torments of which both man and beast are bound to submit. The mosquitoes are the first arrivals but, considerable as are their powers of annoyances, they are too well known to need description. There are various other tribes of winged pests, apparently designed for the purpose of making people wish they had never seen the country; and the smaller they are, the more poisonous do they seem to be, and the more persistent are their attacks.

Perhaps the worst fly of all is one that devotes its attention almost entirely to the torture of horses and cattle. It is a large fly, of an exceedingly persevering character, and is most appropriately known as the "bull-dog." These bull-dogs do their work in the heat of the day and, when they are at their work, it is a very common thing to see their unfortunate victims speckled with blood from their bites. Sensitive horses sometimes become so maddened by the stinging of these cruel insects as to become almost unmanageable, and man's sympathy for the sufferings of his horse cannot but be mixed with a feeling of satisfaction that the bull-dog considers human blood less palatable than equine. But he is by no means secure, for there are plenty of other flies to bite him. Flies indeed of various kinds seem to be provided for all purposes, seasons and conditions—flies for the night, and for the day, for hot weather and for cool.

During the months in which the flies are most troublesome, thick white smoke may be seen ascending from every farm-yard at sunset. This is the smoke of little bonfires of wet hay or straw (known as "smudges"), which are burned to drive away the flies before milking, an operation that is during summer performed out of doors.

It is during hay-making that the flies are perhaps the most obnoxious, for the long grass is a favourite resting-place of the mosquitoes and their objectionable companions. The hay is usually cut round swamps and bluffs out on the prairie, but many of the richer farmers have hay claims of their own from which they draw their supplies. Patches and strips of the best grass are cut in various places, and the hay, when made, is stacked on the ground to be drawn home on the sleighs in the winter.

As July gives way to August the vast stretches of waving emerald green fade into yellow and deepen into gold. Then the

busiest time of all begins. On small farms additional help is seldom afforded, but in the southern and western districts of the province where, owing to the absence of bush, a very large acreage is often under cultivation, high wages are paid to harvesters. In these parts the corn is threshed as quickly as possible (often straight from the stooks) and drawn away to be stored in huge elevators, or warehouses, that stand along the railroad. The farmer can then take the money for his grain at once, or wait for a time in the hope of a rise in prices, a small percentage being charged for the storing of his crop.

In other parts of the country, notably round Winnipeg, the crop is stacked, and after being threshed in the autumn or early winter, is drawn into town (sometimes from a distance of forty or fifty miles) on sleighs or wagons, according to the season of the year, and sold in the open market. Enough of the straw is kept for bedding and feed, but the rest, wasteful as it may seem, is ruthlessly burned, the ashes serving to manure the land.

Thus is the year made up upon a farm in Manitoba. Large fortunes are never made out of farming, and even small ones are seldom realized; but it is a life that has many advantages. It is a life in which everything necessary to a contented existence, and a comfortable home, can be purchased at the price of so much labour and so much industry. Under the homestead laws 160 acres of land can be obtained from the government at the nominal fee of \$10, which after certain small improvements have been effected become the absolute property of the settler. A strong arm and a willing heart can supply the rest. But of course a small sum of money to start upon is an uncommon help to a settler.

To a young man accustomed to a comparatively luxurious life in England, the roughness of living will at first be keenly felt. Many of the comforts and extravagances of his past life will be sadly missed if he goes out to rough it in the colonies, but in a surprisingly short time he will cease to wish for the little things that at first seemed so necessary to his comfort. Men who were wont to criticise the efforts of the most accomplished of chefs, did not know what they would do without hansoms, and shuddered at the sight of an ill-cut coat, often prove the hardiest and happiest settlers in a colony. There seems to be some subtle attraction in the perfect freedom and independence of the

life that in most cases works wonders upon men just escaped from the bonds and restrictions of society laws in an older country. The healthy exercise of this outdoor existence away in the backwoods and on the prairies of America is probably an important factor in the evolution of feeling. But, whatever the cause it is a fact that most of the men who at first condemn the country and its life (and they are many) confess before a year is out that "it is not such a bad place after all."

Sport is to be had in plenty. Grouse, partridges and ducks can be shot during the season, in unlimited numbers, while geese, turkeys, cranes, plovers and hares are very plentiful in many places. For larger game, bear, elk, moose and antelope are still to be found in plenty, while wolves are always worth shooting, for in addition to the satisfaction of waging war against their tribe, the skins during the winter are exceedingly handsome. If riding be desired there are always cattle to herd, or runaway steers to chase home. If driving be wished for buggies and cutters are not expensive, and the Manitoba roads, though not always good, are certainly very long. Thus, whatever the disadvantages of the country and its climate are, emigrants, from whatever class they be drawn, may rest assured that their future life will be manly, healthy and free. And many could take a far worse step than trying their hands at Farming in Manitoba.

# The Strange Case of Thomas Blakewitch.

#### PART I.

### RELATED BY ANTONY MARC, JOURNALIST.

IT was plainly evident that I needed a holiday, and I determined to have it; the only question was, where should I go?

I was feeling awfully out of sorts; couldn't eat, couldn't sleep. and worst of all, couldn't work. To be sure, I managed to keep my pen going, and daily turned out a certain amount of "copy" for the journal on whose staff I had the honour to be engaged; but the work was done in a perfunctory manner, with a distinctly unsatisfactory result. A novel, which, when completed, I believed would make a decided "hit," was lying upon my desk; I had written as far as "Chapter 18. How the murderer was tracked-," and, for the life of me, couldn't add another sentence. Several short stories sent to magazines were "declined with thanks," and at last I received a delicate intimation from the editor of the Daily Fillip that my recent contributions had not been up to the mark of those which had procured me the staff appointment mentioned above, with an expression of hope that I should be able to give more satisfaction in future. This determined me. I would give myself a month's rest. I left that question of the murderer for mature deliberation, and turned my mind to the more interesting one of-where should I go?

Bath? Brighton? Jericho?—None of these places exactly suited my ideas of a restful retreat, "Far from the madding crowd," such as I longed for at present. At length I decided to run down to W——, an out-of-the-way little watering-place, in which my old friend, Dr. Quorn, had bought a large house and a small practice some three years before. He was a cut-and-dried old bachelor, and for aught I knew, might be willing to receive me into his house during my brief holiday. At any rate, I should not be quite solitary, a stranger in a strange land, if I set up my tent in his neighbourhood.

And here I think it necessary to mention that the narration

which follows has nothing to do with me personally; I am merely a go-between, as it were, from the Doctor to the reader. I shall endeavour to give a faithful report of what I heard from him in the course of conversation, and shall furthermore present the reader with a copy of a letter subsequently received from him: for the rest, I shall keep in the background as much as possible.

I found Dr. Quorn very comfortably settled in his house, with a cook who knew her business, and a housekeeper completely au fait on everything connected with the management of an old bachelor's establishment. He readily agreed, or rather himself, suggested, that I should become his guest while I stayed at W——.

One evening, when I had been with him about a week, we were sitting together in the miscellaneous apartment which was neither library, surgery, nor smoking-room, but a delightful mingling of all three; having lit our cigars and sampled a certain particularly fine brand of old whisky, on the possession of which the Doctor prided himself, we fell into rather rambling conversation. Among the topics we discussed, was that of hypnotism and kindred subjects. The Doctor was rather latitudinarian in these matters, and was disposed to give greater credence to the reported results of unauthorized experiments than is usually considered orthodox by the faculty in general. We theorized on the subject of doppelgangers, and whether it was possible for a person to be absent from the body during the life of the latter. Presently the Doctor said:

"Before I came here, I was acquainted with a gentleman named Thomas Blakewitch. He resided in a house which was his own property, situated in the neighbourhood of Gwillingham, where I was formerly in practice. A year before I left that place he disappeared, and I believe nothing has been heard of him since; but his case has recently been brought to my recollection by a singular circumstance. He was a hypnotist, if ever there was one; and moreover possessed of what I may call psychic powers, for which we at present lack a nomenclature.

"The house in which he lived was a sort of 'Sprites' Hall.' It was an old, worm-eaten, fungus-webbed manor-house; completely overrun with ivy in front, and shadowed behind by knotted, grotesque, witch-like trees, coeval with the mansion.

It was half surrounded by what had once been the moat, but was now a piece of stagnant water, coated with green scum; over which was thrown the crazy wooden bridge that led to the front door. It was a place only fit for owls and ghosts, but Blakewitch seemed to think there was some affinity between the uncanniness of the house and the peculiar pursuits of its occupant. And," added the Doctor, with a twinkle in his eye, "I don't know but what he might be right."

"What pursuits do you allude to?" I asked.

"Oh, he had all sorts of hobbies. He was of a scientific turn; indeed, our acquaintance began with his asking me to come and look at a curious machine he had had constructed from his own designs, and consisting of a powerful air-pump, attached to a long coffin-shaped receiver of ground glass; the novel thing about it was the shape and size of the latter, and an arrangement of cogs and springs by which the pump was made to work automatically upon pressing a button within the receiver. He was very reticent respecting the use to which he intended to put this machine. Also, he was a good musician. I never," said the Doctor, who was an enthusiast on the subject, and himself no despicable performer on the violin-"I never heard such strange voluntaries as he would improvise when the mood was on him. Their character was deeply tragic for the most part, but there were wild modulations into lighter moods of melancholy tenderness, and snatches of fanciful melody; in the brightest of which, however, ever and anon, a weird discord, like a Mephistophelean laugh, introduced the original motif, and sombre harmonies led on to the final crash, for," laughing, "he usually concluded with an earthquake. I daresay this sounds like nonsense to you-you don't care for music, or at least you don't enthuse over it. But the pursuits that I particularly alluded to were connected with the subjects we were speaking of: hypnotism and so forth. I believe he made experiments on everyone who would submit to them, and very likely tried to mesmerise himself. I have often wondered what he wanted that machine for. When he disappeared, his only living relative—a nephew-was staying at 'Sprites' Hall.' I had some correspondence with him—the nephew, I mean—and he informed me that he could not learn how his uncle had disposed of the machine, but it certainly was not in the house."

The Doctor paused to light a fresh cigar (he was a great smoker), and I asked:

- "What about the disappearance?"
- "It happened just four years ago. Before that event, it had been noticed by the gossips of the neighbourhood that he sometimes was absent from home for days together, going and coming so mysteriously that nobody ever saw him depart or return. On this last occasion he went away in the same sudden and secret manner. Less notice would have been taken of his continued absence, if his nephew had not been his guest at the time."
  - "And how was it accounted for?" I enquired.
- "There were all sorts of rumours afloat," he replied. "It was even said that he had been murdered, and as his nephew was his only relation, there were some who did not hesitate to accuse him of committing the crime, in order to become possessed of his uncle's property. These accusations, however, were never more than covertly suggested; and I, for one, believe them to be entirely without foundation in fact. It was reported, also, that he had fled the country in order to escape his creditors; but this is pure fiction, he was not in embarrassed circumstances. His nephew inserted advertisements in the leading newspapers and employed other means to discover what had become of him; but all without effect. Altogether, it is one of the most curious cases I ever came across."

Dr. Quorn sat silently puffing his cigar, apparently lost in reflection, for five minutes or so after he had said this; and I rose from my seat to look at a photograph in a little frame of silver filigree, that stood on the mantelpiece. It was the portrait of a man of very striking appearance, unusually so, I thought. The features were clear cut, and extremely refined; the hair and short beard, jet black; the upper lip short and curved, like that of Apollo in the old Greek statues; and the shape and "set" of the whole head almost ideally graceful. The eyes, however, were very singular. They were dark and deep, and full of fire: even the photograph revealed that; but they had also such a vivid fixedness, such an intensity of expression, that I almost started when I encountered their glance, though they only gazed at me from framed cardboard.

"That," said the Doctor, looking up, "is the portrait of the

man I have been speaking of—Thomas Blakewitch. He gave it to me a short time before he left Gwillingham—if he ever did leave it."

As I returned to my seat I remembered that my host had said something about the case being recalled to his memory by something that had happened since he came to W——, and I asked him what were the circumstances he had alluded to.

"It can only be a coincidence, a remarkable resemblance," Dr. Quorn answered. "And yet, to me, there is something inexplicable about it. Shortly after I came to this place, or about eighteen months after Blakewitch was missing from his home, I was summoned to the bedside of a man ill of fever. His name is Bryant Stubbs, and he is a one-armed man. Understand me, the loss of his arm is not recent; nor indeed is it a mutilation that he suffers from: he was born so. That should go far to prove his identity! Nevertheless, when on approaching the bed, I caught the first view of my patient, I could have sworn that Thomas Blakewitch was lying before me. The expression of his eyes (have you noticed the keen look of those in the portrait?), the curl of the lip, nay, the very moulding of the features—was exact: it was Thomas Blakewitch to the life.

"But something far more extraordinary was to follow. This man was in a fever, and at times delirious. Now, what do you think? During his raving fits, he constantly spoke of Gwillingham, he mentioned things that had formed subjects of conversation between Blakewitch and myself when alone together; av. and actually repeated our very words. Sometimes he imagined he was playing a musical impromptu; at others, he was engaged in some occult experiment; and he talked about the air-pump and glass coffin I have mentioned. Now this man, Bryant Stubbs, was in poor circumstances; his education had been neglected; and his conversation, when in health, and during the intervals of consciousness when suffering from fever, was generally neither polished nor intellectual. 'generally,' because it happens that every now and then he reverts to this-what shall I call it?-abnormal condition, and mystifies me, and other people also, by the suddenness with which he puts off Bryant Stubbs, and assumes Thomas Blakewitch. And whenever this occurs, it is accompanied, or rather preceded, by a remarkable change in the cast of his features, in his whole expression, even in the sound of his voice. Sometimes the change is instantaneous; at others it is gradual, one face coming slowly over the other, if I may so express myself: like the change from winter to spring, when the 'leaf' slide is pushed before the 'bare-bough' slide, at a magic-lantern entertainment. During the two-and-a-half years I have known him, there have been several transformations of this sort.

"Now, what do you think of all this? I may add that Stubbs has always lived at W——, and, so far as I can learn, has never been within a dozen miles of Gwillingham. What do you think of it?"

"Well," I replied, "it certainly seems very queer. I confess I cannot understand it. Are you sure you have not allowed your imagination to play you a trick, and exaggerate both the physical resemblance, and the coincidences of language and idiosyncrasy you speak of?"

"My dear Marc," answered Dr. Quorn, "do you think one trained in my profession would let himself be deluded by a fanciful imagination? It is usually the other way with us doctors; we are often accused of being too matter-of-fact, materialistic, or whatever you like to call it. No! I give you my word of honour, there is not the slightest shade of exaggeration in the account I have given you."

"Then," I said, "I own I am completely non-plussed, and unable to offer any suggestion that could help to solve the mystery."

A ring at the surgery bell put an end to our tête-à-tête.

"Wonder they've left me in peace so long," said the Doctor, as he hurried away. The rest of the evening I had to myself.

A few days after this conversation, Dr. Quorn and I sallied forth to explore some romantic ruins in the vicinity. My companion was something of an antiquary, and I was glad to have him for a guide. Some scenes in my unfinished novel were to be enacted in the apartments of an old castle; an inspection of the venerable fabric we were about to visit, would enable me to give additional picturesqueness to my descriptions.

It was a beautiful afternoon in early autumn. Heaven and earth were radiant. "The slumbrous light was rich and warm;" its mellow splendour transfigured the landscape; amber glory was spread over land and sea.

There is a great difference between spring and autumn sunshine. The sunshine of spring is intense, exhilarating; it sparkles like new wine. It is bright and clear, but not sympathetic. It pours a searching ray on all the relics of the pitiless days when frosts bit deep, and ruin was abroad. As pitiless, it stares in the blushing face of every weak and tempest-draggled thing. It is not passionate; it is like a vestal, beautiful but austere.

The autumn sunlight is of riper strain. Mellow; subdued; full of sclemnity, but yet instinct with voluptuous languor. It loves to rest on the broad marble steps of palaces; to strain itself through the gorgeous symbolism of painted windows; to sleep on the crimson couch of the woods. It has sympathy, It broods over the grave of the dead spring; luxuriates in the glad sentiment of harvest; and flings its mournful pomp around the year's decline.

As we were turning down a narrow lane, the Doctor suddenly clutched my arm:

"Look there!" he whispered sharply.

I followed the direction of his eyes, and saw a man emerge from the fields into the high road; he was of medium height and had but one arm. As he advanced towards us, I noticed the close resemblance between him, and the portrait of Blakewitch. The features in the one, and in the other seemed identical. Had I not heard the Doctor's story I should certainly have believed the portrait to be that of this stranger.

"This is Stubbs; but he is Blakewitch just now," said the Doctor, with grim humour.

We stood at the angle of the lane, where it joined the road, and a clump of young trees that grew close to the path, effectually screened us from his view—though we could see him plainly enough—till he was just on us. I never saw such a change as came over that man's face when he perceived the Doctor. If he had had a mask hidden in his hat, and had let it drop down over his face that instant, the alteration would not have been greater or more sudden. It is impossible to explain in what way the change was effected. One noticed, however, that some of the most salient features became less accentuated, and vice versa; some muscles tightened while others were relaxed; lines appeared which were not visible before, and while the

eyelids became more drooping, the corners of the mouth assumed an upward curve.

Not only the face, but the whole man, seemed transformed. His figure seemed to swell out, his gait altered, and he appeared a different person altogether.

He bowed slightly to the doctor.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Stubbs," said Dr. Quorn.

"Good afternoon, sir," he replied, rather sullenly; but the voice thrilled me. There was something strange, almost unnatural, in its tones. It seemed a double voice, if I may say so, it was as if two persons had wished the doctor good afternoon, the one in a tenor key, the other in a bass; but the notes so chorded into one sound that it was impossible to separate them.

"There," said my friend, as the man passed on along the road, and we went down the lane, "now you have had ocular demonstration of what I told you the other night. I wish he had played the rôle of Blakewitch a little longer. I would then have stopped and entered into conversation with him, and when he Stubbified you would have been more able to judge of the wonderful power this man has of living a double life—of the way in which he unites two separate identities in his own mysterious individuality. But you see I did not exaggerate the effect of his physical transformation."

About a fortnight later my visit came to an end, and I returned to Town. My holiday had proved beneficial in all respects. I went back to my duties invigorated in body and mind; I believe my articles in the *Daily Fillip*, and the concluding chapters of my novel, bore ample testimony to the fact.

### PART II.

From Julius Quorn, M.D., W—— to Antony Marc, Esq. London.

The Cedars, W——,

September 10th, 189—.

My DEAR MARC,

When you were staying with me about this time last year, I related to you some rather curious circumstances in connection with the case of a person with whom I was formerly acquainted—one Thomas Blakewitch. I have no doubt you



remember the facts, and therefore I need not recapitulate them. You saw the photo of Blakewitch, and, if my memory serves me, we once met the man Bryant Stubbs, when you witnessed the extraordinary change of feature to which he was subject. As you seemed greatly interested in this case, I think you will like to know something more of it, and therefore send you the particulars of a recent event which go far to elucidate the mystery.

Well, Bryant Stubbs is dead, and I have just come from his funeral. During his illness, which was a rapid decline, the duplication of his nature, as I may term it, became more pronounced. The changes occurred with greater frequency, and the difference between the two (you know what I mean) was very observable. As Stubbs, he was irritable, obstinate, and sometimes coarse in his expressions; as Blakewitch, he made no complaint of his bodily sufferings, and was always gentle in manner, though occasionally eccentric in speech. There was a doggedness in his behaviour in the former character, in strange contrast with his manner when posing in the latter.

During the last three weeks, however, the Blakewitchian element apparently gained the upper hand; I can now understand how this came to pass, and so will you, when you have read my letter. The man interested me, and I gave more time to him than, in the interests of my other patients, I could well afford to spare.

Something appeared to be troubling his mind, and he often seemed on the point of making me his confidant, but the instant he opened his lips that change, which you have seen as well as I, came over him, and he resumed the dogged sullenness of Stubbs.

The day before he died, however, he opened his mind to me fully. The statement he made is, I believe, unprecedented in its strangeness, yet it seems to offer the only possible solution of what has so often puzzled me. However, you shall judge.

I was sitting by his bedside, when I observed him fix his eyes on me with a most intense expression. It was the very glance of my Gwillingham acquaintance. I asked if I could do anything for him. He requested the nurse to leave the room, and when we were alone, said:

"I do not know what good it will do, but I feel I must tell

you some things about myself which you will hardly believe, but which are, nevertheless, perfectly true. If no good results to me from making you my confidant, at least the narrative will serve to warn others from that trifling with the mysteries of nature which has proved so unhappy in my instance. But first, do you know who is speaking to you?"

"Of course," I answered. "I have always understood your name is Bryant Stubbs, and I know you to be an inhabitant of this parish."

He rejoined: "It is indeed the body of Bryant Stubbs you see before you, and his spirit, though dormant just now, is present in that body—but in company with another, which speaks to you by the lips of Bryant Stubbs, but is, in fact, the spirit of Thomas Blakewitch."

"Wandering in his mind," thought I, and yet the mention of the last name gave me a curious sensation. However, if he was out of his senses, it was best to humour him, so I assumed a matter-of-fact air, and enquired:

"Where is your body then?"

"That," said the voice, "I will tell you presently. I can read your thoughts. I know you feel incredulous, but hear me patiently, and I will endeavour to make myself as intelligible as possible.

"You are aware," the speaker continued, "that during the time you were in practice at Gwillingham, I was engaged in certain experiments, some of them in connection with hypnotism, but I now tell you that my investigations extended to subjects vet more obscure. In particular, I wished to find out whether it was possible for the spirit to leave the body previous to death, and, if so, whether the separation would be permanent. If it was free to come and go at will, as we daily walk in and out of our houses, I foresaw we should be enabled to increase our knowledge of this planet, and probably of other worlds, to an indefinite extent. We have it on the authority of the greatest uninspired writer of ancient or modern times, that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy, and I thought the mere imaginable possibility of the thing should incite us to investigations that might one day lead to its realisation. Briefly, my researches assured me that it could be done, and the results of my experiments eventually enabled me to disengage my spirit from its fleshly tenement, without inflicting any injury upon the material portion of my being. The risk, at the first trial, was awfully great, as there was a chance that I might be mistaken in my conclusions respecting the possibility of a return to the body. But I made the venture, and found that by an exertion of will I could soar through space, while my body remained in a comatose state, indeed, quite inert and corpse-like, and that a similar effort restored me to that mortal habitation from which I had been so strangely absent. I may mention that I found myself still confined to our own planet. There were insuperable impediments to my advance beyond the limits of this world. Within those limits I was free to wander wherever I listed. Of what I saw and felt in my disembodied condition I am unable to give an account. My thoughts are exercised night and day with the wonders of which I then obtained a knowledge, but I lack words capable of giving them expression."

"How is it possible," I interrupted, "for you to think without the aid of words?"

"Thought, as well as emotion, can exist without the symbols of language," he answered. "The lower creation may convince you of this. Watch a dog dreaming: he imitates the motions of the chase, he licks the hand that does not caress him, and so on; thought must be going on in his brain, for his eyes and senses are closed to the apprehension of outward objects. Has then a dog a vocabulary? is he possessed of language in which to clothe his ideas?"

"Monkeys are said to have a speech of their own," I said flippantly.

"That is begging the question. But to resume. My aerial excursions increased in frequency and extent, and I became alarmed lest some accident should befall the body from which I was absent, sometimes for weeks; or lest the action of the air and other causes should give rise to the decay to which, in its inanimate state, it was peculiarly liable. In order to avert this danger, I invented the machine you saw in my house. When I wished to quit my earthly tenement, I placed myself in the large glass receiver, and, pressing the button, set the machinery in motion. My spirit then took flight, while the air-pump exhausted the air from the receiver; and thus my body remained

hermetically sealed up from the disintegrating influences of the atmosphere. The machine itself was deposited in a secret vault under the old house where I lived. There it remains; and my body is now lying preserved in its glass coffin, as fit for the reincarnation of its spirit as on the day, four years ago, when I quitted it."

"Then," I asked, "why in the name of common sense, don't you return to it?"

"There comes in the terrible part of my story," was the reply. "When, after an absence of several weeks, I returned to the vault, judge of my horror at finding the receiver empty; my body had disappeared."

I was getting interested, as was shown by my exclamation at this point.

"I thought you said it was lying there now?" I said.

"So it is. It has been replaced—but listen! It was an awful time with me till I found what had become of it. It appears that Bryant Stubbs had somehow, by the merest accident, made the discovery that had cost me so much thought and toil—I mean, how to cast himself loose from the body without committing suicide. His spirit, wandering about, perceived my body lying where I left it, and straightway entered into it. I had no resource but to take possession of the one which was his own property, and then endeavour to make him quit mine. But he would not. He found the body he now possessed more convenient than the one he was born in; for the former was perfect, while the latter was minus an arm!"

Here, I am sorry to say, I could not forbear laughing.

"It was no laughing matter to me," said my interlocutor. "As persuasion was of no avail, I determined to hypnotise him; and while he was in the trance, I removed him to the house at Gwillingham, and placed him in the receiver; and then I suggested to him that he should, immediately on awaking, return to his own body, and there remain. You know these mesmeric suggestions are always complied with. Accordingly, no sooner had I made the necessary passes, than he awoke and entered his own body, in which I was."

"But why did you not thereupon assume your own?"

"Alas! I speedily discovered I was powerless to make that impression on the brain, by means of my will, which was

necessary in order to detach spirit from matter, while his will was also acting in opposition to mine. You cannot conceive with what intense effort I attempted to do so; but though I once or twice very nearly succeeded, his will was never entirely subdued, and I have never been able to escape from a thraldom which is abhorrent to me. The reason why he refused to release me was this: he found it very convenient to sink his own identity in mine whenever he had occasion to conceal that identity. of the transactions in which he has been engaged are not very reputable, but he was thus enabled to elude the unpleasant consequences resulting from them. Besides, by this means he obtained admittance where he would otherwise have met with scornful rejection. And as one brain served for both, any pleasure I enjoyed in those refinements to which he was a stranger, was reflected to his mind, which received the sensation, without appreciation of the cause. So here we are, two souls in one body!

"Since his illness I have not been so liable to such complete effacement at the will of another as was previously the case. Enfeebled in mind—the sympathetic result of bodily weakness,—he is no longer able to restrain me from proclaiming these facts. Formerly I had power to make only momentary revelations; his spirit clouded over mine before I had time to seek advice or consolation. It was always on the watch. Even now it is by an effort that I continue my communications. I am holding him down, as it were, all the time.

"But if he dies, as seems likely, from his present illness, I think I shall escape at last; for as my spirit does not belong to the body in which it is now confined, there is no probability of its being dismissed from the world at the dissolution of that body. However, directly the latter event takes place, I wish you to proceed to Gwillingham. I may be there to welcome you, but if not, you will see to the security of the vault where my mortal remains are deposited."

He then described the situation of the vault, and the manner in which I could obtain access to it. We had some further conversation not needful to repeat. At a quarter to one that night Bryant Stubbs died. Nothing remarkable occurred on that occasion. My letter has spun out to such inordinate length that I shall not trouble you with any observations or reflections.

To-morrow I set out for Gwillingham, I will let you know the result of my visit. In the meantime, I am,

My dear Marc,
Yours faithfully,
JULIUS QUORN.

P.S.—I have this moment received a telegram from Blake-witch's nephew. He says, "Uncle suddenly returned. Extremely weak, otherwise well. Requests your immediate attendance."

I shall take the night train to Gwillingham.

WM. E. LANHAM.

## The Story of a Broken Life.

THE following manuscript, dim and yellow with age, was recently found among certain other family papers, in the repositories of a well-known firm of legal practitioners in the city of Edinburgh.

There is no reason to doubt the substantial accuracy of the account given of the tragic events to which the manuscript refers.

The writer was one "Gavin Stuart," formerly a surgeon and general medical practitioner.

For the hands of my dear nephew and niece—these—

Ever since, upon your warm invitation, I took up my permanent abode in your happy home, now so many years ago, it has been present to my mind that I ought to set down in writing, for your perusal after my death, a brief account of the terrible tragedy which suddenly overwhelmed my youth, and has continued to cast its black shadow over my whole after life.

You were both such mere children when the events of which I am about to write took place, that these must be entirely outside the scope of your personal recollections, and although you may have heard from my late brother, your good father, something of my dreadful story, I nevertheless think that it behoves me, now that my eye is growing dim, and my natural force has become much abated, and when I feel that my weary pilgrimage is fast drawing to a close, to set down a plain and brief account of the circumstances which left me, in my early manhood, a broken-hearted man.

As you are aware, I was, in my youth, bred to farming, while your late father turned his attention to the law, and finally founded in Edinburgh the business of which you, my nephew, are now the respected head.

While still a very young man I married a lady of the good city of Edinburgh, and for one short year our lives were quietly and serenely happy. Alas! Alas! my fair young wife!—in what a sudden horror of great darkness was our happiness destined to be swallowed up!

At the time of which I write, the province of Galloway, in which I began the active business of life, was in a very unsettled and even lawless state. Gangs of gipsies had their permanent encampments in the district, while the absence of anything like a properly-organised police force, the badness of the roads, and the consequent difficulty of communication with the outer world, rendered criminals of all kinds bolder and more reckless than could nowadays be readily imagined.

Smuggling was also common, and was carried on in almost open defiance of the law.

In the five and forty years which have since elapsed great changes and vast improvements in the moral and social condition of the people have taken place, and Galloway has now become one of the most settled and law-abiding districts in the whole kingdom.

The most disturbing and alarming local events, however, of the unsettled times of which I write were the mysterious disappearance at frequent intervals of travellers, and even of residents in the district.

For many years fruitless speculation and idle talk had beenthe only outcome of these alarming events, and certainly down to the time of which I write no efficient or properly-organised attempt had been made by those in authority to solve the problem.

That this should have been the case seems almost incredible, but it is nevertheless literally true.

It was my fate to become the means of solving the mystery, and of effectually ridding the country of a band of robbers and murderers, whose deeds of blood had long cried aloud to Heaven for vengeance.

The knowledge that I did so has been my chief solace and consolation in many weary years.

My good friend, the minister of your parish and congregation, to whom my story is known, has often striven to bring me to a more becoming frame of mind upon this matter, and perhaps, if I could have followed his good Christian counsel, the burden of my sorrow might have proved a less intolerable load than it has been to me.

After all, what is the use of extending forgiveness to the dead—dead most righteously through my means!

And now I will to my story, and when you have read it,.

condemn my conduct, and the fact that I am not even after all these years ashamed of it, if you can!

The farm of which I, at the age of twenty-six, became tenant, was situated almost upon the boundary line which divides the provinces of East and West Galloway.

This district of country was then and still is for the most part, a pastoral one, only a small portion of the land being fit for the plough.

My farm was a large one, extending to considerably upwards of a thousand acres of hill-pasture and moorland, with a small portion of arable land near the house.

The house itself, although by no means large, was thoroughly comfortable and in excellent repair.

Well do I remember, even at this distance of time, with what joyous pride and loving care I furnished and prepared my unpretending dwelling for the reception of my betrothed, Marjory Gray, daughter of my father's old friend, Dr. Gray, of Edinburgh.

It was while upon a visit to your father's house in Edinburgh (the same in which I now write) that I first met with the lady who afterwards became my wife. Mine was a case of what many sensible people profess to disbelieve in, viz., love at first sight.

Well do I remember our first meeting. The occasion was that of a Hallow-e'en party, and previous to the inevitable dance, various games, forfeits, and other sports peculiar to the season were engaged in.

The gathering was a large and merry one, and for an hour I entered as gaily as anyone present into the merry sport of nutburning, with which the evening's amusement began. Blindman's-buff, hunt the slipper, and various other good old-fashioned games followed, and were the occasion of much merriment and any amount of jovial noise and confusion.

These sports over, the two drawing-rooms were cleared for dancing, and upon looking about me for a suitable partner, my eyes suddenly fell upon the face of a new and late arrival. A young lady simply dressed in white and wearing a flower and spring of green in her bosom, stood just within the door of the outer drawing-room. Her golden hair fell in trim luxuriance over her shapely shoulders, while her dark blue eyes sparkled with vivacity and happiness.

It was the work of a single moment! I felt in that instant that, for good or evil, my destiny was accomplished. There was, in my case, no such thing as deliberate falling in love. I tumbled headlong into that blissful state in much less time than I have taken to write it down, and I have never since left it.

I daresay you, my dear niece, will naturally think this statement of mine incredible, and in all probability dub your grave and elderly uncle a foolish and doting old man, but it is written and it must stand, for it is the literal truth.

Within a fortnight of this first meeting, Marjory Gray and I had plighted our troth, and within six months we were married.

I have an idea that some of my wife's friends and relatives in Edinburgh were rather surprised, and not much pleased, that she should be willing to bury herself in such an out-of-the-way district as that in which her lot was to be cast, but no serious objection to the marriage was taken by her worthy father or any member of her family, and so in due course we were married.

How cheerfully and easily did my darling wife accommodate herself to the strange ways and unfamiliar scenes upon which she entered on her first arrival at her new home! Fortunately my old housekeeper—a faithful and valued servant in my father's family from my boyhood—remained at her post long enough to "hansel the new mistress," as the worthy body expressed it, and initiate her into the multifarious mysteries and duties which are the inevitable portion of the "gude-wife" in a Scottish farmhouse.

"Aye, ye hae been the lucky ane, Maister Gavin," said my faithful old friend on taking her departure to enter upon the occupation of a snug cottage in a neighbouring village, "for a' her ceety up-bringing an' leddy's ways and genty speech, I'se warrant the gude-wife'll be the fellest housekeeper in a' the countra side. Min' what I'm tellin' ye!"

As my old friend was certainly not given to "vain babbling" upon any subject whatever, I confess that her evident warmth and sincerity in praise of my winsome bride was a matter of no small comfort and satisfaction to me.

Subsequent events proved the entire accuracy of my old friend's opinion, and as weeks and months went by, everything in my dear wife's department of our affairs seemed to go by clockwork.

Let me not dwell now upon that happy time! Not even to you, who are so near and dear to me, can I lay bare the secrets of my loving and sorrowing heart. I must keep them to tell to my Marjory herself when we meet again. It can be but a little while now, I thank God!

About a year after my marriage, and late in the month of September, it became necessary that I should proceed to the town of Dumfries upon a matter of business which would admit of no delay, and as the weather was very fine and my wife was most anxious to accompany me, in an evil moment I consented to her doing so.

We accordingly set out, my wife being, according to the custom of the time and country, mounted upon a pillion behind me.

I was of course armed with sword and pistols, and reckoned myself fairly skilful in the use of both. Not that I anticipated having any occasion to use the weapons, but it was then very unusual for anyone possessed of arms to travel far abroad without them.

Our journey to Dumfries was accomplished without accident or event of any kind. Upon our arrival we found the town in a state of considerable bustle and excitement, owing to the occurrence at that time of the half-yearly feeing or hiring fair, and, indeed, we had passed upon the road many travellers bound in the same direction as ourselves.

Upon arriving at our journey's end we put up at a comfortable inn, and there remained until the following day.

Next morning I was early astir, and having transacted all my business in the course of the forenoon while my wife visited certain friends resident in the town, we were ready by two o'clock in the afternoon to start upon our homeward journey.

Would to God we had delayed or been detained for one short hour longer, when the general exodus from the fair would have set in, and many parties of travellers would probably have been seen all along our route!

Even as it was we passed at various points upon the way many parties who had left the fair at an even earlier hour than ourselves, but as my horse was a good one and got rapidly over the ground, these parties of travellers became fewer and farther between, until, when two-thirds of our journey had been accomplished, and we were pursuing the road which ran along the top of the cliffs near a wild and solitary spot known as Ravenshall, we found ourselves quite alone. We had, however, recently passed a merry party of young men travelling on foot in the same direction as ourselves.

And now my heart fails me, and my trembling hand can scarce pen what must be written.

Within a few hundred yards of the spot where we had passed the young men the road took a sudden turn to the right and away from the sea, and passed between two steep rocks which there confined it within narrow bounds, and almost entirely obstructed the view ahead.

We had almost passed this natural barrier when my horse shied so suddenly and violently that I almost lost my seat, and my wife clung to me in terror, as two wild figures sprang from either side of the road, clutching at the reins.

Shouting to my wife to hold fast to me, and dropping the reins for an instant, I drew my pistols, shot one of our assailants dead upon the spot and mortally wounded the other.

At the reports of the shots several other savage-looking men and women sprang into the roadway, clutching at the horse's bridle and mane.

My sword was out in an instant, and I slashed savagely right and left, but at that moment I felt my wife's grasp suddenly relax. She had fainted with surprise and terror, and slipped from her seat to the ground.

In an instant one of the dreadful-looking females threw herself with a savage yell upon my wife's prostrate body, and buried a long knife in her heart.

The next moment my avenging sword clove the fiend's head to the chin, but, alas! too late to save my darling's life!

Now, for the first time, I remembered the party of young men recently passed, and shouted for help with all the strength of my lungs.

My shouts were answered. The young men had heard the pistol shots, and were already hurrying to the rescue.

The first sound of their voices was the signal for the remainder of my assailants to desist from the attack and seek safety in flight. They scrambled with extraordinary agility up the steep face of the rocks which rose from the landward side of the road and in a few seconds were lost to sight among the whins and brushwood.

What a sight presented itself to the horrified gaze of my rescuers who now joined me!

My poor wife lay stone dead upon the spot where she had fallen—the cruel knife still buried in her gentle heart. Almost upon her body lay that of her destroyer, who had never moved after receiving my sword blow, delivered, as it had been, full upon her uncovered head with all the strength of fury and despair.

Of the two men I had shot, one was dead, the pistol bullet having passed through his brain. The other had been shot through the body, and presently expired with a dreadful groan.

I have since been told that my own appearance and behaviour were those of a madman, and that it was found necessary to disarm me by force, in order to prevent me from turning my bloody weapon either upon my rescuers or myself. Presently nature came to my relief, I reeled in the saddle and fell heavily to the ground.

When I recovered consciousness I found myself lying upon a rough bed in a cottage situated about a mile from the scene of the tragedy. At first I was unable to recal either where I was or what had happened. All too soon, however, remembrance rose, and with it, not so much the horror of the dreadful scene through which I had so lately passed, and of my wife's tragic fate, as a burning, maddening desire for vengeance.

The lives of the three wretches which had already paid forfeit to my avenging arm seemed but a paltry measure of revenge, and I solemnly swore to take no rest while one member of the murderous gang remained alive.

Three days later all that was mortal of my departed wife slept beneath the turf of the quiet churchyard of the parish in which my farm was situated, and on the day after the funeral I started for Glasgow.

It happened that a distant relative of mine then filled the Provost's chair in the metropolis of the West of Scotland, and to him I resolved in the first instance to appeal for advice and assistance.

Reaching Glasgow without adventure or delay, I hastened to lay my dreadful tale before my influential relative. My account

of the tragic fate of my young wife naturally filled him with horror and distress, and he readily agreed to my urgent request that he would accompany me to Edinburgh, and give me the weight of his official presence in laying the matter before the King himself.

His Majesty received me with the greatest consideration and kindness, and so enraged was he with the perpetrators of the crime that he gave instant orders for a picked body of soldiers to be made ready to proceed under my guidance to the scene of the tragedy with the object, if possible, of exterminating the whole bloodthirsty gang.

Accordingly, in four days' time the expedition was ready to start upon its mission of vengeance, and at the last moment the King determined to accompany it in person.

By His Majesty's own suggestion several trained blood-hounds were procured, and these animals accompanied the expedition. As it turned out, the unerring instinct of the hounds was eventually the means of tracking the murderers to their lair.

Upon the arrival of the expedition at the spot where my poor wife met her death—to which I was of course able to direct its march without hesitation or delay—a considerable time was spent in making fruitless search for some traces of the criminals.

The length of time that had elapsed, and the hard and stony nature of the ground for a time rendered the search unavailing.

The blood-hounds were then brought up, and in the course of half an hour, one of them suddenly struck upon the trail. At the first note of his deep warning bay, the other dogs joined him, and followed the trail in the direction of a precipitous cliff overhanging the sea.

The upper portion of this cliff was densely clothed with brushwood, and into this the dogs plunged without hesitation, following a very steep and narrow but quite noticeable pathway, which zigzagged down towards the sea-beach below.

A previously-selected body of specially young and active men eagerly followed, and along with this party I went.

About fifty feet from the foot of the cliff the leading hound suddenly stopped before a dark and narrow fissure in the face of the cliff, and set up a loud howling and growling, in which the other dogs one by one joined as they reached the spot. My heart bounded with stern joy, for now at last it was certain that the murderers had been tracked to their doom.

A messenger was instantly dispatched to the main body of the expedition, and in a very short time a farther party of one hundred armed men arrived upon the scene.

Torches having been lighted, the entrance to the cave was effectually surrounded, and the officer in command and I led a party of fifty men into the dark and gruesome-looking entrance.

As we entered our nostrils were assailed by a horrible stench, which grew more overpowering as we proceeded—which we did with the greatest caution.

To our great surprise, the narrow and steeply descending passage by which we entered speedily opened out into a great cavern, as large as the interior of a small church.

No living thing was to be seen here, although large quantities of garments and goods of all kinds were piled in heedless confusion around the sides of the cavern, proving that the place had been used by the robbers as a storehouse for their plunder.

At the farther end of this great cavern appeared the dark entrance to another and much smaller cave, and round this aperture the dogs now collected, growling and otherwise betraying the fiercest excitement, but not venturing to enter.

Two active young men of our advance party, however, snatching torches from two of the attendants, dashed fearlessly into the dark fissure, followed by all the dogs, and these fierce animals became instantly engaged in a furious struggle with some persons within.

Except that at the first onset two of the dogs were severely stabbed with knives, which served only to increase their ferocity, no effectual resistance was offered; and more men with torches having passed into the inner cave, the wretches harbouring there were one by one brought out and securely bound.

The gang was found to consist of an aged and most villainous-looking couple, evidently the progenitors of the other prisoners; eight men and six women apparently of all ages between twenty and fifty years; and no fewer than fourteen lads and boys and eleven young women and girls.

The appearance of the whole of the prisoners was shocking and repulsive in the extreme. Their hands and faces were completely encrusted with filth, while their long and matted hair hung down upon their shoulders. Not one of them wore head or foot covering of any kind.

They were speedily brought to the top of the cliff, and taken before the king, who gave orders that they should one and all be conveyed to Leith, and there be put to death with all speed, and without further formality or any form of trial.

I did not accompany the party which guarded the prisoners, but by desire of the king, remained behind to assist in the further examination of the plunder contained in the outer cave.

I may however here mention the ultimate fate of the prisoners.

They were, in the first place, taken to Edinburgh, and committed for one night to the Tolbooth, or common prison there.

On the following day they were executed upon the foreshore at Leith in one of the barbarous methods now happily unknown in our land.

The arms and legs of the men were severed from their bodies, and they were then left to bleed to death; while the women were first strangled at the stake, and their bodies afterwards burned to ashes.

I would have been glad to learn that these wretches had shown some signs of remorse or repentance, but such unhappily is not the case. On the contrary, they one and all died cursing and railing at their executioners with their latest breath.

I returned to my desolate home with the fixed resolve of remaining there only long enough to wind up my affairs, and turn my stock and furniture into money.

Fortunately my landlord proved sympathetic and kindly, and agreed to relieve me of my holding at the next ensuing term of Whitsunday.

Long before that time arrived I had made up my mind to devote the remainder of my life to the study and practice of medicine, and with that end in view I entered as a student at the University of Edinburgh.

Although much above the usual age of medical students I passed the various examinations without any serious difficulty, and entered upon the practice of my profession in the city of Edinburgh in my thirty-third year.

As you are aware, my career was one of speedy and almost unbroken success, and I am glad now to think of the large

amount of suffering and sorrow I have been in my time enabled to alleviate.

Few indeed of my patients could, I think, have guessed through what a dreadful sorrow their composed and cheerful physician passed in the days of his youth, and how tragically and suddenly the love of his life was buried in his fair young wife's early grave.

To say that no thought of a second marriage has ever entered my mind would be to say little indeed. Never for an instant of my waking life has my darling's presence seemed to be far from me, and as I wrote at the outset of this sad story, so I now repeat at its close, I am thankful that my weary pilgrimage is nearing its close, and that the hour cannot now be very distant when I shall once more greet the love of my life upon that blissful shore where there is "no more sorrow nor crying for the former things are passed away."

A single word I must say before finally laying down my pen as to the identity of the murderous crew whom I was the means of bringing to their well-deserved doom.

The head and progenitor of the band turned out to be one Sawney Beane, originally a native of the county of Haddington, and from his youth a man of singularly wild and reckless nature. Having been, in his native county, guilty of a savage and unprovoked assault and robbery, this man fled from justice, taking with him a woman of equally abandoned character.

How or why they happened to make their way across the country to the province of Galloway I know not, but it appears certain that during all the years of their residence there they subsisted mainly by the proceeds of murder and robbery, and brought up their children and grandchildren in the same evil courses.

It was estimated at the time of which I write, that not far short of one thousand persons perished first and last by the hands of these human fiends—my precious wife being their last victim. Alas! Alas!

### The Princess Tarakanoff.

THE saying that truth is stranger than fiction has passed into such a commonplace, that it has almost ceased to seem a paradox, for fact can soar where fancy must clip its wings, or face the charge of improbability. The lives of all the impostors, the pretenders, the claimants, who have been more or less famous since the world began, present a sort of general likeness. so far as the chief event of all is concerned. It is the circumstances, the surroundings, the accessories, so to speak, which go to make up their histories, that leave room for an infinite The story of the unhappy and mysterious person whose name is given to the present brief record, bears the same hall-mark as that of so many others, who have attempted to play a false part upon the stage of life. For though she has had historians such as Castéra and Helbig to uphold the reality of her claims—to appeal to the sympathy of posterity by a touching and glowing narrative of her misfortunes and her wrongs, the weight of evidence on the other side, especially such as the modern writer, Brueckner, has been able to bring forwardseems to leave little doubt as to the utter absurdity of her pre-It is not therefore the failure to recognize what she tensions. asserted to be her just rights, which makes her claim to be remembered. Her place in the memory of the aftertime is on the muster-roll of the unfortunate—her sanction to be placed there is due to her as the victim of one of the most cruel acts of treachery by which human nature was ever disgraced.

As Russian history is a subject comparatively little studied by English readers, a very brief explanation is necessary of the position of affairs in Russia in the year 1775, when the reigning sovereign was Catherine the Great.

Properly speaking, indeed, Russian history can only be said to originate with Peter the Great, who began to reign jointly with his elder brother Ivan, but into whose hands the whole power soon completely passed. Peter was twice married, first to Eudoxia, whom he divorced, and by whom he had one son, Alexis. This unfortunate prince left Russia without his father's

permission, and for this offence was put to death on his return, the Czar himself being the executioner. Alexis left a son afterwards Peter II. The second wife of Peter the Great was Catherine, who succeeded to the throne on his death, and is known as Catherine I. By this marriage there were two daughters, Anne, married to the Duke of Holstein Gottorp, whose son, Peter Paul, was the husband and predecessor of Catherine the Great-and Elizabeth Petrowna, afterwards Empress. Catherine I. was succeeded by Peter-son of the Czarewitch Alexis, who only reigned three years, and died in 1730, at the age of thirteen. The succession now passed to Anne, widow of the Duke of Courland, and niece of Peter the Great, being the second daughter of his elder brother Ivan. The Empress Anne was only a nominal ruler, as she left the reins of government entirely in the hands of her favourite Biren, a monster of cruelty, who literally dyed the land with the blood of his victims, while those who escaped the edge of the sword either crammed the prisons, or crowded the wastes of Siberia. Anne summoned to her court the daughter of her elder sister. the Duchess of Mecklenburg, and arranged a marriage between her and Anton-Ulric, Duke of Brunswick-Luneburg. named their child as her successor, passing over his mother. On the death of Anne the claims of this child were put aside, through the jealousies and intrigues of the courtiers, and a bloodless revolution, chiefly contrived by a surgeon of French extraction, named Lestocq, placed Elizabeth Petrowna, daughter of Peter the Great, on the throne. About the time of her mother's death, Elizabeth's hand had been sought by the young Prince of Holstein-Eutin, Bishop of Lupeck, but he had died of small-pox a few days after their betrothal. Elizabeth declared that she never would marry, and so far as outward appearances went, she kept her resolution. It seems, however, quite certain that she was privately married to her favourite, the Hetman Alexis Razoumoffsky, formerly a soldier in the regiment Préobraginsky. In after years, when the ministers and advisers of Catherine II. saw political reasons for urging her to contract a second marriage, they sought in the union of Elizabeth and Razoumoffsky, a precedent for that of Catherine with her favourite Gregory Orloff. When Razoumoffsky was asked to disclose the truth on this subject, which was otherwise only a

matter of conjecture, he went to a cabinet, and took out some papers, carefully kept in a satin case. These he burned before the eyes of his interrogators, and said—" Je n'étais jamais que l'esclave de l'Impératrice."

The elder sister of Elizabeth had, as has been said, been married to the Duke of Holstein-Gottorp, and it was her son, the unfortunate Peter Paul, afterwards known as Peter III., whom Elizabeth chose as her successor. She arranged a marriage between him and the Princess Sophie of Anhalt-Zerbst, who was received into the Greek Church under the name of Catherine, by which she afterwards became so famous as Catherine the Great. This marriage took place in 1745. On the death of Elizabeth in 1762, Peter Paul ascended the throne. He was a person of weak intellect, and the lowest possible morals. He and Catherine, who was not his superior in the latter respect, had long been estranged, and on his accession, he spoke of repudiating her for his favourite the Countess Woronzoff. Upon this the adherents of Catherine, foremost amongst whom were the two Orloffs, her favourite Gregory and his brother Alexis, seized and imprisoned Peter, and then murdered him. The precise manner of his death is not certainly known. One account attributes it to poison, but the more general belief seems to be that he was strangled—some writers say with a strap, others with a napkin by Alexis Orloff, who is so infamously associated with the history of the unhappy person known as the Princess Tarakanoff.

A month after her husband's death, Catherine was crowned Empress of all the Russias. Although her power was so ill acquired, she used it wisely and well, and under her rule, Russia made rapid progress in the direction of civilization.

From the foregoing account, it will be seen that Catherine's hold on the sceptre depended solely on her own strength of grasp. Her only title to the throne was that of usurpation, a title which makes those who rely on it very jealous of alien pretensions. The rebellion of Pugatscheff, who asserted that he was Peter III., whose death had been falsely reported, began in 1773, and was not crushed for two years. When therefore, in 1774, Catherine heard that a female pretender to the Russian throne had appeared, who called herself the Princess Tarakanoff, and claimed to be the daughter of the Empress Elizabeth and Razoumoffsky, it is scarcely surprising that the news caused her

grave concern. She gave orders to have the "Weibsperson," the "Vagabundin," the "Abendteuerin" enticed (gelockt) to Russia at any cost. That any man in whom there was a spark of honour, or the faintest instinct of humanity, could be found to effect this by the means which Alexis Orloff employed, must remain a subject of wonder till the depravity of the human race becomes a more generally accepted fact than it at present is. Amongst writers of history there will always be found on the one hand those who seek at all costs to arouse the interest, the sentiment, the sympathy, of their readers, by the production of a highlycoloured narrative, even at the expense of accuracy or veracity; on the other, those who set a rigid, plain, unvarnished statement of facts above all things, and willingly forfeit the romance of their narrative in order to ensure its absolute truth. Thus Castéra is a zealous partizan of the Princess Tarakanoff, the daughter of the Empress Elizabeth, and heir by the will of that sovereign, to the throne of all the Russias. Brueckner, on the contrary, calmly and dispassionately tells the story of an adventuress, the impudence of whose claims was only equalled by their audacity, while he bequeaths to the reader, as he takes leave of the subject, an enigma to which he can offer no solution.

In the year 1774, according to Brueckner, an adventuress appeared in Italy, who claimed the Russian throne on the pretence that she was the daughter of the Empress Elizabeth and Razoumoffsky. She stated that she was born in 1752; she had been previously known in London as Aly Emettée, an Oriental princess. The English Ambassador at St. Petersburg said she was the daughter of an innkeeper at Prague, the English Consul at Leghorn thought her father was a baker at Nürnberg. was called by many different names, Mlle. Schöll, Mlle. Tremouille, Gräfin von Runeburg, Princess Vladimir. All the accounts of her agree in describing her as possessed of great beauty, and powers of fascination. From London she went to Paris, where, in her quality of a Circassian, she became the fashion for a time. She described herself as possessing vast estates in Asia, and succeded in duping various persons who advanced her money on her property in the Caucasus. In 1773 she made her way to Germany, and there her charms made a victim of Philip Ferdinand. reigning Count of Limburg, who was madly in love with her, and on the point of making her his wife. It was at this time

that she declared her pretensions to the Russian throne, by asserting that she was the daughter of the Empress Elizabeth. Her story was that when quite a child, she had been taken away from her father the Count Razoumoffsky, and brought to Siberia. An attempt had been made to poison her, which however was frustrated by a faithful follower, and she had then been taken to Persia, to the court of the Shah, a relative of her father. order to strengthen this fable, she fabricated several wills which she alleged were those of Peter the Great, Catherine I. and Elizabeth, according to which the succession was assured to herself. These papers she sent to the Court of Constantinople, and to Alexis Orloff, who was in command of the Russian fleet in the Mediterranean. Then regarding a petty German prince as too paltry a match for the Princess of all the Russias, she threw over the Count, who is also called by some writers the Duke of Limburg—notwithstanding his protestations, and his despair. for which she seems to have had no pity.

She next went successively to Venice and Ragusa, but was forced, for want of money, to leave those towns, pursued by her creditors. She was at Rome when the Empress Catherine, indignant at her pretensions, commissioned Alexis Orloff to get her into his power by whatever means he could, and to convey her to Russia. The task was not so easy, as she seems to have inspired in Italy a general belief in her claims. Orloff sent his aide-de-camp to Rome to pay her debts, and to advise her to come to Pisa, where he was himself detained. The infatuation which made her follow this counsel and trust herself so implicitly to a stranger, can only be accounted for by the supposition that the relief she experienced from his help in a time of such need, made her blind enough to believe that Orloff had really espoused her cause. She took her departure from Rome with great pomp, flinging handfuls of money to the beggars who cheered her as she went.

A magnificent house had been prepared for her at Pisa, where for the first time she met Alexis Orloff. He was a very handsome man, remarkable for his gigantic stature and his herculean strength. He treated her with all the deference and homage due to her supposed rank, and was guilty of the unutterable baseness of pushing his fortunes at the Russian Court, by playing the part of her lover. He pretended to be passionately in

love with her, and his ardour was so well feigned, that he succeeded in completely winning her affections. Her subsequent history seems to show that amongst all the shams of which she was made up, her love for Orloff was the one real thing. Orloff was anxious that their marriage should be publicly solemnized at Pisa, and Castéra asserts that it actually took place. Most other accounts, however, agree in asserting that the Princess Tarakanoff wished to postpone it, saying she would wait for better days. Orloff's object in this proposal was to secure a pretext for getting her on board the fleet. Such a pretext was needed, for at the slightest suspicion of foul play the Italians who favoured her cause would have been ready to defend her from violence. Catherine meantime was getting impatient. When the fleet lay outside Leghorn she wrote to Orloff to throw a few bombs into the town if any difficulty was opposed to the embarcation of the supposed princess. Orloff, however, was determined to proceed without violence, and by means of artifice, which, having won the confidence of his victim, would be the easiest course. He now suggested that the Princess Tarakanoff should pay a visit to the fleet, to witness some naval manœuvres. A magnificent fête was arranged, the whole squadron was under arms, and a vessel splendidly decorated came to embark her at Leghorn, and convey her to the admiral's ship. No sooner had she put her foot on board than she was taken prisoner. A pretence was made at the same time of placing Orloff under arrest. Perhaps he felt some reluctance to let her learn the whole extent of his treachery at once. Her despair was terrible, but as the whole truth gradually dawned upon her, it seems to have been above all for the loss of her lover that she grieved. Several times during the voyage she tried to kill herself or to throw herself overboard.

On the 11th of May, 1775, she arrived at Cronstadt, and was thence conveyed to the citadel of St. Petersburg. A legal investigation began at once, but resulted in throwing no new light upon her past history. Her great desire was for a personal interview with Catherine, but this was always refused, which was scarcely surprising, since she was foolish enough to sign the letter in which she asked for it "Elizabeth." It is said that during the enquiry Catherine was present at least once, and heard all that went on through an aperture in the wall, while her curiosity was

satisfied by seeing the prisoner. The Princess Tarakanoff knew no Russian, but asserted that she knew Persian and Arabic. When, however, she was asked to write down a sentence in these languages, she only scribbled something which nobody could read, and then said that it was the ignorance of the persons who tried to test her knowledge which was at fault. She was guilty of a further blunder in stating that she was the daughter of the Cossack Hetman Kyrill Razoumoffsky, whereas it was not he, but his brother Alexis, who had been the favourite of the Empress Elizabeth.

While in prison she was treated with the utmost severity. She was deprived of her maid and left under the sole guardianship of men, who were in her cell day and night, and she was given only the coarsest food. It was thought that the hope of obtaining some mitigation of this treatment might lead her to make further disclosures as to her origin, but this she never did, although she appears to have withdrawn her claim to the throne. The extreme rigour to which she was subjected was at last relaxed by the governor of the prison, who took upon himself the responsibility of lightening the hardship of her condition. Her health, however, had been failing for some time past, and she gradually faded away, and died of consumption on the 4th of December, 1775. A general belief prevailed that she lived on for several years, and that her death was partly caused by the sufferings she endured during an inundation of the Neva, when her cell was flooded. A sensational picture by the Russian painter Flavitzsky represents her in her prison trying to find a refuge from the advancing waters, but she had been dead some years when the inundation occurred.

Two Poles, Czarnomsky and Domansky, were in prison with her, and the latter fell in love with her. According to one account, she was offered her liberty on condition of marrying him, but she refused, saying she could not marry a man of such low rank. Perhaps even in this extremity her love for Orloff still survived.

As to her real parentage, nothing is, or ever will be, known. With regard to her assertion that she was the child of Elizabeth and Razoumoffsky, Brueckner says, "The fables which Castéra and Helbig have woven about the Princess Tarakanoff, like many other things which they relate, have found credit, but they

require correction. Wassiltschikoff, in his monograph on the Razoumoffskys in the eighteenth century, shows how through Schlozer's notes the mistake arose that there were quite a number of sons and daughters of Elizabeth and Razoumoffsky, who were called Tarakanoff. There were some nephews of Razoumoffsky who bore the family name of Daragan. While Budoff Melinkoff and others attach belief to the tradition of a son and daughter of Elizabeth, who pined away in a monastery and a convent, Wassiltschikoff comes to the conclusion that most probably Elizabeth never had any children at all."

In considering the history of this unhappy and mysterious adventuress, whatever may be thought of her pretensions, few persons will withhold their compassion for her undoubted wrongs—fewer still will raise a dissentient voice against the verdict of eternal obloquy, which will for ever darken the memory of Alexis Orloff.

SLINGSBY MARCHANT.

# Under a Grey Veil.

### By MAX PIREAU.

"For the son of man there is no noble crown, well worn, or even ill worn, but is a crown of thorns."

CARLYLE. "Past and Present."

## PART I. CHAPTER I.

#### RUTH.

THE afternoon sun was slanting in long level rays over the little town of Kemperton, when a ramshackle old fly rattled along the broad road which led from the station to the hospital. Its only occupant was a girl of some twenty-two years of age, who gazed about her curiously as the fly turned in at the hospital gates. Ruth Winter was feeling not a little inward tremor. though not for worlds would she have acknowledged the fact. The profession of nursing sounds, at a distance, such an elevating and noble one, that it is only when fairly embarked upon it one realises that, after all, the hospital nurse is usually developed from the ordinary home-grown girl, and that the aforesaid girl does not become a different being directly she dons a uniform. Ruth was just beginning to see this, and wondering whether every nurse, on her initiation, experienced the same desperate desire to turn and flee ignominiously. But next minute the arrival of the hall porter, a magnificent personage in a uniform of blue and gold, and accompanied by a trim-looking maid, reminded her that she must summon up all her dignity. The porter, with a condescending smile, handed her over to the maid, who led her up what seemed to Ruth's inexperience endless flights of stone stairs and through long corridors, till she ushered her into the tiny cubicle allotted to her use.

Tiny indeed, but Ruth had no eyes for anything but the glorious view from the wide-open window, a view which seemed to fill the mean little room with something of cathedral dignity. The Kemperton Hospital stands on high ground overlooking the town on one side, on the other a wide expanse of wood and water, hill and dale. Far away into the dim violet distance

stretches the tender green of the pasture lands, alternating with the deeper tone of the woodlands, the silvery gleam of the winding river, the dun tints of the wind-swept, thyme-scented downs, and almost indistinguishable against the horizon the flash and sparkle of the far-off sea. A fair scene, and never fairer than on this quiet summer afternoon, with the rays of the sinking sun bathing all things in a golden haze, and the lengthening shadows creeping over the hospital garden below.

Ruth walked straight to the window, and stood there drinking in the beauty of it all. The love of the beautiful, whether in nature or art, was almost a religion to this girl, who had inherited from her artist father, a quick perception of beauty in common things, but with its accompanying drawback of equally quick perception of the faintest shadow of ugliness in life. ' Strange material of which to make a hospital nurse. Doubtless -but just now the dominant note in Ruth Winter's complex character was her intense sympathy with poverty and suffering; sympathy which, though real enough, was too apt to be manifested in sudden flames of enthusiasm, which burnt themselves out by the force of their own ardour. She could not know, as she stood on the very threshold of this new life, shrinking a little from the unknown waters into which she was about to plunge, but full of eager hope and untried enthusiasm-she could not know in what manner the lesson of steadfast endurance should come to her. And perhaps it was well that she could not.

Her hat and cloak laid aside, Ruth followed her conductor to the nurses' sitting-room, where she found about a dozen girls, wearing the pretty grey uniform of the Kemperton Hospital. They greeted the newcomer kindly enough, supplied her with tea, and tried to dissipate her evident shyness. Ruth listened curiously to the babel of high-pitched chatter, and wondered whether she would ever feel at home in this strange atmosphere of "ward talk," "cases," and probationers' duties.

Presently the door opened, and there was a sudden lull in the conversation, as a Presence sailed into the room.

I say "a Presence" advisedly. The matron, Mrs. Denbigh, was the very embodiment of dignity. She was tall and stately, with tiny hands and feet, a complexion of lilies and roses, abundant brown hair streaked with grey, china-blue eyes, and an expression of mingled power and benevolence which often

led strangers to remark, "What a sweet-looking old lady!" But appearances are sometimes deceptive.

"Nurse Ruth, please come with me to my room," said the Presence, fixing her blue eyes upon Ruth, who followed meekly to a dainty little sitting-room, bright with books and pictures, and redolent with the scent of hothouse flowers. Mrs. Denbigh motioned her to a seat, and to Ruth's embarrassment, fell to studying her face and figure in perfect silence. Certainly it was one which might interest a student of physiognomy, though many people would have denied Ruth Winter's claims to beauty. Her hair, of that peculiar shade of reddish brown seen in the pictures of the early Italian artists, lay in soft ruffles over a brow too high for perfect proportion, her deep blue-grey eyes were set in dark circles, which told the experienced eyes watching her of restless days and sleepless nights.

"You do not look very strong," said the stately matron at last. "You have brought a medical certificate, of course."

Ruth responded in the affirmative.

"Let me see, you told me in your letter you were twenty-two. Have you ever had any experience of home nursing?"

The girl's face was shadowed by a wave of recollected pain.

"I nursed my mother in her last illness, four years ago. Since then, as I think I told you, I have been teaching."

"And what induced you to give up the teaching and take to nursing instead?"

Ruth paused, seeking for fitting words. How could she tell this woman the story of the struggle of the last few weeks, a struggle between, on the one hand, the artistic, ease-loving temperament, which was her paternal inheritance, and on the other, the vague passionate longing to "do something and be something" in the battle of life, which had ultimately ended in her resolve to become a hospital nurse.

"I have always liked attending to sick people," she said at last. Mrs. Denbigh's lip curled the merest trifle.

"You will find, nurse, that there is a considerable difference between 'looking after anyone who is ill' (which generally means putting their bed-clothes straight every five minutes, arranging strongly-scented flowers in their room, and reading aloud to them when they have a headache), and hospital nursing. The latter means hard, often unpleasant work, and before taking it up it is best to disabuse your mind of any false ideas. I do not want to discourage you, but so many girls come to me with their heads full of high-flown notions of becoming ministering angels and that sort of thing, and they usually fail to see the necessity of having their wings clipped before they can be of any use. I hope it may be otherwise with you; you look as if you had a fair share of common sense."

Ruth was silent. The last remark appeared unanswerable.

"Well, you may go now, nurse. After supper I will tell you which ward you are to work in."

Ruth was only too thankful to be allowed to make her escape. She went back to her cubicle, and when she had finished unpacking, mounted the high window-seat, and sat gazing out over the darkening landscape, the grey ghost-like mist which crept softly up from the river bank, folding field and woodland in its weird embrace, the lamps beginning to shine here and there in the valley, like giant glow-worms.

Presently the sound of voices warned her that the tenants of the adjoining cubicles had appeared.

"You see, after all, Lena, the Benson didn't manage to keep me on duty over time," remarked the girl whose cubicle was nearest to Ruth's. "As soon as Nurse Mary came on I decamped, while my lady was exercising her fascinations on the H. S."

"By the way, how does that affair go on?" asked the girl addressed as Lena.

"My dear, it's just too lovely for anything. She simply flings herself at his head, and he—well, you know what Dudley Carnegie is when he thinks a woman is giving herself away. He——"

"Don't you think it is a little injudicious to use names so freely?" struck in another voice impatiently. "Walls have ears, especially the Kemperton Hospital walls."

"Right, most sapient Evelyn," responded Lena serenely. "Marjorie, just stop your nonsense. Eve can tell us a great deal more about a certain person's idiosyncrasies than you can, my dear."

Evelyn laughed, but scarcely in mirthful fashion.

"I really think the aforesaid person is sufficiently discussed in this establishment, and I am quite sure I am not going to add

to the general information about him. Do be quiet. I am going down to call on the new nurse." And Evelyn Harrison tripped down the passage and knocked at Ruth's door, who started to her feet, surprised at the lovely little picture framed in the dark oak doorway.

Afterwards Ruth came to the conclusion that Evelyn, for all her fascination, was not and never could be beautiful, for her face held no suggestion either of strength or intellect. Just now she had no eyes for anything but the feathery golden curls, the Dresden china complexion, the soft dark eyes, and appealing child-like expression. Evelyn stood there, a dainty little figure in her picturesque uniform, evidently noting, and as evidently not displeased by Ruth's involuntary look of admiration.

"May I come in? I thought it would be nice to make friends before that dreadful bell summons us downstairs again—for supper, you know," she added in explanation, as she perched herself lightly on Ruth's bed; "and after that there are prayers, and then at last we are free. You'll find a list of the rules and a time table knocking about somewhere, but I wouldn't advise you to study them. It's occasionally convenient not to have seen things."

"Very, but there is not much chance of failing to see the rules of this establishment," said another voice, as Marjorie sauntered in. "Pray don't mind me," nodding nonchalantly to Ruth, "I'll sit on the floor. I can always accommodate myself to circumstances. Lena, you lazy creature, have you gone to sleep? Come and make the acquaintance of a friend of mine, to whom I shall be happy to give you an introduction if you will invite us both to a cubicle spread next Saturday night."

"Oh, I'll invite you, if you'll square the accounts," replied Lena entering. "May I come in, nurse? It's rather cool to descend upon you in such a fashion, though."

"Not at all," said Ruth. "I should be so grateful if you would tell me something about the life here. Mrs. Denbigh has given me rather an appalling account of it."

"Oh! So you have had an interview with our respected matron?" observed Marjorie. "Dear old lady, isn't she? Did she tell you you looked as if you had not a single qualification necessary to make a nurse, that you were much too young, that she was not wanting any more nurses at present, and that,

in short, it was only her innate goodness which induced her to allow you to enter this delectable establishment?"

"Not quite all that," said Ruth laughing. "She told me I did not look very strong. Is the work really so very hard?"

"Well," said Lena, meditatively, "it's pretty stiff, but when you once get interested in it you don't think much about that. Mrs. Denbigh would, I believe, work us all to death without the slightest compunction, but many of the Sisters are nice enough, and Dr. Carnegie sometimes interferes if he thinks Mrs. Denbigh is putting it too strong on any unhappy probationer."

As Lena spoke she cast a swift interrogatory glance at Evelyn, who returned it by one in which defiance and fear seemed strangely mingled. Ruth caught the silent interchange of looks, and wondered what was the tacit antagonism between these two.

"You will know all about the work soon enough," said Evelyn, shrugging her pretty shoulders.

"Evelyn, how can you!" exclaimed Marjorie indignantly. "Don't frighten the poor girl by hinting at horrors in that fashion. 'Tisn't really so bad," she added consolingly to Ruth. "They don't, as a rule, give the new pros. more than three persons' share of work, and if you are lucky enough not to be put in the Benson Ward, you don't get reported to the committee more than twice a week on an average."

"Marjorie, you are really too bad," said Lena laughing. "I am afraid, Nurse Ruth, you will get a peculiar idea of the Kemperton Hospital nurses from this degenerate specimen."

Before Marjorie could retort, a bell clanged violently below, and she jumped up.

"Oh! that abomination. I should like to drown it as deep as the Danes did the Bosham bell. Come along, your Serene Highness, I want to get down before the Benson appears."

Linking Lena's arm in hers, she disappeared down the staircase, while Evelyn followed more sedately with Ruth.

"That's our maddest probationer," whispered Evelyn laughing. "But she is one of the best nurses in the hospital, for all her wild ways."

In the nurses' sitting-room they found the whole day staff assembled. Supper, as presided over by Mrs. Denbigh, was a depressingly correct function, and the prayers that followed

even more so. These formalities concluded, the nurses filed decorously out of the room, a decorum which was scattered to the winds as soon as they found themselves outside the door.

"You will go to the Walton Ward to-morrow, Nurse Ruth," said Mrs. Denbigh, as Ruth passed her.

"Good, that's my ward," said Evelyn. "I am so glad she has put you there. I am sure we shall be friends."

"I hope so," said Ruth gratefully. "It is so good of you to take up a forlorn stranger like this."

"You will soon get used to things. I remember when I came first how strange it all seemed to me, and how worried I used to be over my work. But now—vive la bagatelle!—I have learnt to take life more lightly."

"Are you fond of nursing?" asked Ruth doubtfully.

"Bah! What would you have me say? Every nurse is, by virtue of her profession, supposed to be devoted to nursing. Better not probe beneath the surface, my friend. Of course I must be fond of nursing, for am I not a nurse?"

The light mocking tone jarred a little, but Ruth tried to think the girl's cynicism was only assumed.

An hour later the Kemperton Hospital was wrapped in darkness, except where the night lamps burned dimly in the long wards, and Ruth, lying upon her bed with wide-open, sleepless eyes, was wondering what the morrow would bring.

### CHAPTER II.

### IN THE WARDS.

RUTH'S introduction to the wards next morning was rather a revelation. She had been bracing herself to meet painful sights, and the first glimpse of the long, sunlit room, with its row of high windows on either side, the one at the end opening on to a balcony, from which you could catch a pleasant vista of blue sky and waving trees, its snowy-white beds, its ferns and flowers brightening the blue-covered tables, considerably upset her preconceived notions.

She never forgot that morning—the strangeness of everything, the endless journeys up and down the long ward, the first lesson in hospital bed-making (she had been cherishing the delusion that at least she knew how to make a bed), the Sister's short, decisive orders, the tiny, pale-faced atom she was directed to wash, and who watched her tentative efforts with an air of condescending forbearance, as who should say—"I have seen many new nurses in my day, and I daresay you will learn in time."

About ten o'clock Evelyn hurried up to her.

"Put that brush away now. Dr. Carnegie is just coming into the ward."

Evelyn's face was dyed by a faint pink flush, but it might have been only the effect of her haste to get the objectionable brush removed out of sight.

Ruth could not help looking with some curiosity at the young man who was just entering, and who appeared to form so large a factor in the life at Kemperton.

"A wretched, effeminate-looking, little mannikin"—That was the first impression Dudley Carnegie's handsome face and slight figure produced upon her. It was only when she could study that face more closely, could see that the fair curly hair hid a brow by no means unintellectual, that the blue eyes were keen as a hawk's, and that the tender womanish curve of the mouth was counteracted by the square resolute chin, that she came to the conclusion that possibly the handsome face concealed as much as it revealed of its owner's character. But it was not till long after that that character was fully revealed to her.

Dr. Carnegie moved from one bed to another on his tour of inspection, and Ruth's opinion of the "mannikin" began to rise, as she noted the cool, deliberate manner, the skilful touch, the suggestion of innate power about him. She could not avoid seeing, too, how his face softened when he came to any of the children, and how they looked up at him with that instinctive trust which is the surest sign that the winner of it wears his heart in the right place.

He stopped a long while at the bedside of one little fellow, a pitiful scrap of humanity, with arms and legs like shrivelled drumsticks, and a poor little wasted, distorted, body which would never rise again from that narrow bed, never again run and jump and exult in the glad sunshine and God's gift of living—only lie and wait with that childlike patience which is so sad because so utterly unchildlike, for the great unknown future which was dawning upon him.

"How was the pain last night, Willie—boy?" asked the young man gently, seating himself by the side of the child, who smiled a faint ghost-like smile at his friend.

"Oh! it was very, very bad," he whispered. "But I thought of what you said to me about the others, and I tried not to cry; I did try hard."

"You are my brave boy, Willie. I am sure you did your best not to disturb them."

The young doctor's face had grown very tender as he stooped over the child; then, as he raised his head, he caught the look of sympathetic, quivering pain on Ruth's face.

It arrested his attention involuntarily.

Dudley Carnegie was well accustomed to the ordinary type of nurses who passed through the Kemperton Hospital, the young women who tended their patients with more or less solicitude, studied medical books, broke the rules, circumvented the matron, and flirted with himself, all with a gay insouciance which sometimes astonished this young man, who was prone to take life seriously. This girl looked somehow different, and the instant chill of reserve which came over her, fading the sympathy out of her face, when she perceived his interest, only deepened that interest in a young man who had possibly had too much adulation offered him.

"Nurse, have you ever been in a hospital before?"

The question was abrupt, and Ruth involuntarily drew herself up as she answered in the negative.

"Hm-n! Do you think you will like the work?"

"I have hardly had sufficient opportunity of judging yet."

Ruth was keenly conscious that Evelyn was arching her brows in slightly displeased astonishment, and that the sister-in-charge was looking at her with faint amusement.

Possibly, Dr. Carnegie also saw it, for he turned back to the bedside, and during the remainder of his visit addressed no further remarks to her. Yet Ruth was perfectly aware of, and inwardly fuming against, his quiet scrutiny of her every movement, as she followed in her humble position at the end of the small procession.

When the last patient had been seen, and Dr. Carnegie's short decisive step had died away down the corridor, Evelyn turned to Ruth with a forced laugh.

"You should feel honoured, my dear. It is not often that His Highness condescends to notice a new nurse in that fashion."

"I am afraid I scarcely feel the honour to be such an overwhelming one," replied Ruth, with quiet scorn. "I could very well have dispensed with Dr. Carnegie's questions, which did not appear to me to have much to do with the subject in hand," and Ruth marched off indignantly to the other end of the ward, determined Evelyn should not have a second opportunity of making such remarks.

That afternoon happened to be visiting-day, and Ruth watched with keen interest and amusement the odd groups surrounding each bed. Here a young wife had brought her baby to see "poor dadda"; there an old, grey-headed fellow suffering from sciatica, was minutely describing his symptoms to a group of admiring friends; there a young fellow of twenty was solacing his soul in his enforced inaction by an inspiriting account of a street-fight, graphically described by an eye-witness.

There were sadder groups too. There was the tall, haggard Irishman who was dying of phthisis, and whose dull, commonplace wife was glorified into something very like heroism, as she sat silently clasping his hand, knowing she would only be able to pay him a few more visits, and resolved not to darken those by useless tears and wailings; and there was wee Willie, clinging to his mother as tightly as his feeble strength would allow, while he gazed with large solemn eyes at the gaily-painted soldiers she had brought him.

A hospital ward is a curious mixture of the comedy and tragedy of life.

The next few weeks appeared to Ruth, when she looked back, to have passed like a flash, and yet she seemed years removed from the thoughts and feelings of a month ago. It was a vague confusion of new duties, new ideas, from which one or two apparently trivial incidents stood out sharp and clear. One of these was the day when Dr. Carnegie, in the middle of a clinical lecture, had turned to her and asked if she had read a certain well-known medical work. It happened to be one which she was then puzzling over. The opportunity of elucidation was too good to be lost, despite the proud reserve behind which she had entrenched herself ever since her first meeting with Dudley Carnegie. She answered frankly, and somehow found herself

drawn into an animated discussion with the young doctor, whose quiet remarks had a knack of drawing out his companion's intelligence.

After that day Ruth could not but realise that the barrier she had set up was perceptibly diminished, and that she was beginning to feel more friendly towards Dudley Carnegie than she would at one time have imagined possible.

On another occasion he met her struggling up the stairs with a heavy scuttle of coals, and, taking it from her hand, demanded sharply why she was usurping the porter's place.

"I can't find the porter, and our kitchen fire is nearly out!"

Ruth was almost crying with heat and fatigue, and the doctor's peremptory tone was very nearly the last straw.

Dudley Carnegie paused and glanced whimsically around. No one was in sight—there was no knowing where the porter might be. He, the resident medical officer, would have to carry that scuttle himself!

"The porter is a lazy dog, always out of the way when there is work to be done. Go on, nurse, and don't let me see any more of this coal-carrying. It is not fit work for a woman."

Just as they reached the kitchen the door of the ward close by opened, and Evelyn Harrison walked out. She made no remark, though the spectacle of the immaculately correct house surgeon transformed into a coal porter was certainly unusual, but her brow contracted involuntarily when she saw his companion. A slight flush rose in the young man's cheek, but he faced the matter out coolly enough, and, marching into the kitchen, deposited his burden on the floor, and departed, leaving the two girls gazing at each other.

"Well, I am sure! How very extraordinary," said Evelyn, slowly.

"Dr. Carnegie says coal-carrying is not fit for women, and he was very angry that I did not get the porter to bring that," responded Ruth coolly, though her face was suffused with angry blushes.

"I wonder that he did not put his theory into practice then, by finding the porter for you," rejoined Evelyn, mockingly. "I thought you professed to despise the prevailing worship of St. Dudley, Nurse Ruth?"

Ruth did not trust herself to reply, but left the kitchen, fuming

with rage against Evelyn, against the unlucky porter who had caused the trouble—even against Dudley Carnegie himself. But, on cooler reflection, she came to the conclusion this was manifestly unjust, and that there was no reason, because Evelyn put her own foolish construction on her conduct, to behave as if Dr. Carnegie were to blame. It would be attaching far too much importance to a trivial incident.

Evelyn avoided her for a day or two, but at the end of that time grew tired of solitary sulking. In her own wilful fashion, she was really fond of Ruth. So, without making any actual allusion to what had passed, she tried to put matters once more on their old footing; and Ruth, whose open nature was quick to resent an injury, but quick also to forget it, was only too glad to bury the unpleasant incident.

Another day which Ruth never forgot was that of her first operation.

One morning, when she had just finished her dressings, Sister Courtenay came hurrying into the ward.

"Nurse Ruth, Mrs. Denbigh has sent me word you are to go and assist in the theatre this morning."

"Oh, Sister!—I can't!" Ruth clasped her hands with a piteous gesture.

"Don't be so absurd! Do you ever intend to become a nurse? Because, if so, you know as well as I do that it is necessary for you to go to the theatre. I should not have expected you to turn coward, nurse."

The salutary tonic took effect. A faint colour stole back to Ruth's cheek.

"I am not a coward, Sister, and you know it. But—it is the first time."

"Well, my dear, and hasn't there got to be a first time with everything? You foolish child, we have all been through the same experience. And "—more gravely—"if you wish to turn your nursing to good account, you must go through the difficulties of your preliminary training bravely."

She had struck the right chord. Ruth drew a long breath and stood more erect.

"I will do my best. But—oh, Sister! can't you tell me a little bit what I shall have to do?"

"Possibly nothing; but keep your eyes open and your wits

about you ready for anything which may be required. Dr. Seymour is to perform the operation, and he can't stand a nurse who seems all at sea. You had better go up at once, it is nearly eleven now."

In the theatre Ruth found Sister Benson and her assistant nurse, and in a few moments the two doctors entered.

"You can bring in the child now, Sister," said Dr. Carnegie, quietly.

Sister Benson vanished, to reappear almost immediately carrying a tiny blue-eyed creature of some six summers.

The child held out her little thin arms to the doctor, as the Sister laid her down on the table.

Ruth could not hear his low-toned remark as he took his place and began to work the ugly-looking chloroform apparatus, but she could hear only too well the pitiful cries which the mite set up.

Presently the feeble wails died away, the convulsive movements of the tiny limbs ceased, and the surgeon began his task. Fortunately for Ruth, the evident inefficiency of the other nurse made it necessary for her to keep all her attention fixed on supplying the doctor's needs.

It was over at last, the little maimed limb was bound up, and the chloroform apparatus removed from the wee white face.

"She does not come round quickly."

Dr. Seymour glanced somewhat anxiously at Carnegie, who stooped and put his stethoscope to the child's heart.

"Fetch me some brandy and a hypodermic."

Ruth took one glance at the baby face, over which an awful bluish shade was creeping, and was at the cupboard before even Sister Benson had realised the situation. It was the work of a few moments only to charge and apply the tiny syringe, but it seemed an eternity before a faint breath parted the blue lips, and a shade of more natural colour stole into the wee, deathly pale face.

Dudley Carnegie drew himself up with a long breath.

"That was a near touch. You did well to fetch that brandy quickly, nurse."

Ruth answered nothing. The revulsion of feeling had left her sick and faint, the room was spinning round and round, and Dr. Carnegie's voice sounded such a long way off. Was she going to sleep?

And then she suddenly forgot everything until she found herself lying back in a chair, with someone holding a glass of water to her lips. She tried to sit up, and then she realised that she was still in the theatre, that the tiny patient had gone, and that —oh, crowning humiliation!—she had absolutely fainted on duty.

The shock of the discovery restored her to her senses, and she tried to struggle to her feet.

"Sit still," said an authoritative voice, and then Ruth saw that Dr. Seymour and Dudley Carnegie were standing beside her.

"I—I am very sorry I have been so stupid," she faltered, overwhelmed by the belief that she had disgraced herself irretrievably in the great surgeon's eyes.

"Never mind, you will do better another time," said Dr. Seymour, quite kindly, considering the bear-like temper with which he was usually accredited. "This is your first operation, I believe, and it was perhaps rather a trying one. You did very well till—well, till you let your feelings get the better of you. Come, you need not look so woebegone. Drink a little more water, and then go up to your room and lie down for half an hour. An unnaturally sensitive temperament, I should say," he added in a lower tone to Carnegie, as Ruth rose and left the room. "Not exactly the type to make a good hospital nurse, yet she seems quick and intelligent beyond the average."

"Yes, she is rather a remarkable girl, I fancy," returned Carnegie carelessly. "Has only been here about a month, and has learnt as much in that time as many do in six. But I think you are right about the temperament. I have seen her wince and shudder with absolute pain when some unlucky devil has been groaning with rheumatic fever. Such a nature as that is only a torture to itself in a hospital ward."

"True, yet I don't know how it would be if all hospital workers were as cool and dispassionate as—as Mrs. Denbigh, for instance. And, anyway, Carnegie, you cannot talk, for I believe you have more feeling, hidden away under that rocky exterior of yours, than you would care to acknowledge."

(To be continued.)

# BELGRAVIA.

MARCH, 1896.

# 30an & Mrs. Carr.

By "RITA."

Author of "PEG THE RAKE," "SHEBA," "ASENATH OF THE FORD,"
"THE ENDING OF MY DAY," etc.

### CHAPTER XII.

"THEY HAD NOT SPOKEN, BUT THEY FELT ALLURED."

"ISN'T she an old dear?" asked Mrs. Carr, as they walked past the Knightsbridge Barracks. "I often think what a mercy it was that I was civil to her that afternoon at Milton Dormers'. It was such a chance, too—for she really didn't look much better than a respectable charwoman—and no one was taking the least notice of her. It only shows how careful one ought to be not to judge by appearances. Of course, before she had spoken a dozen words, I knew she was all right!"

"She is very amusing," said Joan, "and good-natured too, I should imagine."

"Yes; she'll do anything for anyone she takes a fancy to. I do wish, though, she would ask me to stay at Beauley Court. It would be as good as baptism in the waters of Jordan. Her house parties are so exclusive."

"And you've never been to one?"

"No. You see, I haven't known her very long—only three seasons. Isn't Lady Christiana a horror?"

Joan laughed.

"She didn't favour me with any notice," she said. "But she certainly did not strike me as amiable."

"Amiable! She's a perfect old cat—spiteful, malicious, interfering. I can't bear her, though I never let her see it."

"How can you manage to be 'all things to all men' so successfully?" asked Joan, as they waited for a convenient crossing to Sloane Street.

"Not to all men, my dear—only to all women. Men put up with your caprices and vagaries for your own sake. Women only for what you can give them."

"Don't you think," said the girl gently, "that it's rather—lowering?"

Mrs. Carr glanced sharply at her, and then laughed.

"I suppose it is," she said. "But I've no fine feelings, and I have ambitions. I know what I want, and I always have managed to get it—and I mean to go on getting it. I find the world very pleasant, and life very amusing; so will you, when you have thrown a few scruples and prejudices overboard."

Joan smiled rather sadly. It was the subject of an old discussion, and she did not feel inclined to renew it.

Mrs. Carr chattered on till they reached their own door. She was rarely silent, and never at a loss for a subject.

"I'm sorry we took that tea," she said as they entered the drawing-room, which already had put on that dismantled and forsaken look eloquent of leave-taking and the packing of hosts of pretty odds-and-ends usually scattered about. "But of course I couldn't refuse. Her tea is horrible, and I don't want to drink any more now. It's so bad for one's nerves, and one's skin, too, they say."

. "She glanced round.

"Isn't it dismal?" she said. "And whatever shall we do with ourselves this evening?"

"Go to church," suggested Joan.

"Oh! I never go in the evening, and I couldn't possibly send you alone. How dreary these good English do make their Sundays. Now, on the Continent we should have a theatre, or opera, or casino or something to enliven us. Here there's absolutely nothing. Not even a band!"

"There is the packing?" suggested Joan.

"Oh! that's all done. Wilson and Nolan have managed it."

"And the new travelling gown?" Joan went on.

"Oh; I forgot that. You haven't seen it. Yes, I can try it on, and we might go to the Brompton Oratory. The music

is always good there. You've no scruples about churches, I suppose?"

"No," said the girl, somewhat wearily. "If God is no respecter of persons, He ought still less to be one of—places."

"Well, I shall go and lie down for half an hour," said Mrs. Carr. "I feel tired. It has been a long day. I advise you to do the same, Joan. It's marvellous how a rest freshens one up. You look rather pale."

She took herself off, leaving the girl looking listlessly out of the window at the glowing sky. She felt strangely tired; she had never in her life passed a Sunday like this—morning church, parade, luncheon party, and now it was but five o'clock and it seemed as if twenty-four hours had passed since she rose that morning. She drew a chair up to the window and seated herself, leaving her hat on her lap.

Her soft, rich hair looked all the prettier for its loose disorder, and she closed her eyes and leant back with a feeling of relief.

The silence within and without was inexpressibly soothing. Gradually her eyes closed and she fell asleep.

It seemed to her but a moment before she opened her eyes with some vague idea of having heard opening doors, and starting up saw Captain Talbot standing in the middle of the room watching her.

She rose hurriedly, but without embarrassment.

"Oh, I am so sorry. Have you been here long? I was so tired I fell asleep while making up my mind to go to my own room."

They shook hands.

"I have only been here a couple of minutes," said the captain.

"The maid seemed to think Mrs. Carr was here, and I was just debating whether I should slip away when you woke."

"My aunt went to her room for a few moments," said Joan.
"She is sure to be here directly. We have had rather a tiring day. At least it seemed so to me."

She gave a rapid sketch of their doings, and he watched her face, which seemed to him lovelier than ever with that soft flush of sleep on the rounded cheek.

"Ah!" he said, "if you were a seasoned young lady, Miss O'Rourke, you wouldn't count this as anything."

- "I suppose not; all the same I feel thankful I'm not seasoned —yet."
  - "That sounds as if you expected to become so."
- "My aunt talks a great deal about next May," said Joan with a little odd smile; then she looked at him as if struck by a sudden memory. "We did not expect to see you again," she said. "Wasn't there something said about the night express to Exeter?"
- "Yes; but I find the day express will be more convenient, and I came to offer my services to Mrs. Carr as our route is the same."
- "Oh!" said Joan, delightedly. "That is kind of you. Aunt is a good traveller, by which I mean not a fussy one, but it is so pleasant to have someone to take the tickets, and see the luggage really does get into the van."
- "Ah! that is where we men come in useful," he said. "I wonder, when woman gets the franchise, if she will also extend her energies to looking after us, and seeing we get into the right trains, and have our luggage labelled correctly?"
- "I think," said Joan, "you are not enthusiastic about progress—feminine progress—are you?"
- "On certain lines only. I dislike notoriety for women in any form, unless Art or Genius compels them to step forward into the light of publicity."
- "I think you are right," said Joan. "I have a vivid recollection of the Women's Club, and the Debating Society. After all, they look better in a ball-room, and more at home in their nurseries or kitchens. But I suppose it is a very humiliating confession."
  - "What about your own feelings?" he asked.
- "Oh! I am easily contented. I look forward to our country life with the greatest delight. You will find me pottering about the garden, and feeding the chickens, in a cotton gown and strong shoes, and becoming generally sun-burnt and rustic and commonplace."
  - "I think you could never be that," he said gently. "If your country is unfortunate in many respects, at least she can boast of producing a race distinctly characteristic, and alike removed from dulness or commonplace."
- "Do you really think so?" asked Joan, eagerly. "I am very patriotic, you know, and though I see our faults and shortcomings

as a nation, I dearly love us as a people. But we are hard to understand, I grant. We are too emotional and contradictory and hot-headed for the comprehension of these cooler-brained English."

"Yet you have done better under their control than when left to your own guidance."

"I believe we have," said Joan. "We are like children. We require a strict schoolmaster, though we won't acknowledge it, and are always ready to play truant and disobey rules and break into open rebellion."

"And you know how to enjoy life and take sorrow lightly," he said, looking at her eager face and brilliant eyes. "That is an enviable temperament, if you like."

"Ah! don't make a mistake about that, Captain Talbot," she said eagerly. "Our light-heartedness and readiness to be amused—or seem it—is more superficial than you fancy, and our dark hours are doubly dark in consequence."

"I cannot fancy dark hours possible to you—or Mrs. Carr," he said.

Joan looked out at the balcony by which she was seated. The slanting sun rays were on the flowers, drooping now and half dead in their boxes. She thought of that night when the moonlight had streamed into the dusky room, and the perfume of the mignonette had floated in through the open window, and of the strange look in Mrs. Carr's face as she said, "I hate to see the moonlight!" This had been another woman to the one of whom Captain Talbot spoke—a woman he could not have associated with any phase of her society existence, with any aspect of the popular, laughing, brilliant Mrs. Carr whom he knew and evidently admired.

"I wonder if he cares for her?" thought the girl, suddenly.

She looked back to where he was sitting, and took in, with one swift glance, the plain, somewhat rugged face, the kindly mouth, the clear, honest eyes, that had, from the first, won her trust and confidence. The idea took hold of her. She followed it out in many phases.

A middle-aged romance!—well, why not? Hearts did not age always with years, and grey hairs had not always excused romance—as fervid and passionate as the dreams of youth were alone supposed to be.

He met her glance, and half smiled.

"I wonder," he said, "what you were thinking of?"

She flushed suddenly; her eyes fell.

"It was nothing very particular," she said; "only that Aunt Bet has her dark hours too, as I, as you, as we all have. To play Polichinelle to the crowd isn't an enviable task. One has to pay dearly for the jests and smiles sometimes."

"That is rather a strange remark from such young lips," said Captain Talbot. "You can know nothing of life yet. Now, with me——"

He stopped abruptly, but she looked up, eager and interested. "Yes," she said, "I hope you are going to tell me something about yourself!"

"There is not much to tell," he said. "My youth was very hard and very lonely. I lost my parents too early to remember them. I was placed under somewhat severe guardianship, and, not being a particularly lovable or attractive boy, I made few friends, and grew up reserved and self-restrained, and unpopular. My life in the Navy has been the one most suited to my tastes and inclinations, and I should not have left it had fortune not thrown into my lap so ample an inheritance that I felt I might as well make room for better men. My tastes are simple, and my life has everything in it that should content me, except——"

"Yes?" she asked softly.

"Except what it has always wanted, and always missed," he said—"love."

The colour rose to his sunburnt cheeks as he spoke the word. It struck him as strange that he should thus be bestowing his confidence on a young girl whom he had known so short a time. But, even as the thought crossed his mind, the door opened, and Mrs. Carr came hurriedly in.

"I have only just heard you were here!" she exclaimed, shaking hands warmly. "I could hardly believe it. What an extraordinary man you are! You are always rushing away from town, and always rushing back to it. I hope Joan has entertained you. She was rather tired—or bored, was it, Joan? I took her to lunch at Lady Beauley's. It is rather an ordeal, till you get used to her, and she had such a funny mixture of people—a judge from the Divorce Court, and a curate from West Kensington, or some such place, if you've ever heard of it, and a

snuffy old peeress, and a woman in blue spectacles who writes theological novels, and two others who looked like female Anabaptists, but were only friends of Lady Christiana's. I wish you had been there. Oh! I forgot you don't know the marchioness. Will you have some tea?"

"No, thank you. I only called to offer my services on your journey to Devonshire, if you really are going to-morrow."

"I really am—there's no help for it. The agents send their horrid inventory people in at ten o'clock, and the new tenants come in the same evening. And so you will come down by the same train? That's delightful! You can give me the carte du pays of our new quarters as we travel down. The servants are going by the early train, so as to have everything in readiness. Let me see, ours is 11.20—30 something, isn't it, Joan? Where's the time-table?"

"Eleven-forty," said Captain Talbot, smiling, perhaps at some memory of his own connected with this eager, vivacious person who seemed to bring an atmosphere of life and unrest along with that personality. "I know it well," he went on. "By the way, you will not have more than ten minutes for lunch, or, perhaps, you—"

"Perhaps I will bring my own; indeed, and I will, Captain. Talbot. I have a basket fitted for four, and can look after my own comforts better than any Spiers & Pond. I'm an old traveller, you know, and a good caterer, as you'll have an opportunity of discovering."

"I'll secure a carriage to ourselves, if you wish," said the captain. "I travel up and down so often that the guards know me perfectly well."

"Yes, do," said Mrs. Carr, "and I promise to be punctual—for the matter of that I always am punctual when it's a question of catching trains. You're sure you won't have any tea, captain? We were talking of going to the Brompton Oratory. I was saying to Joan that English Sundays are the most dismal days it's possible to conceive. Perhaps you'll come with us, unless you can suggest anything else to do."

"Nothing better," said Captain Talbot, smiling, "and I shall be very pleased to accompany you. Strange as it may seem, I've never been to the Brompton Oratory yet."

"Then I will go and make myself tidy," said Joan, rising.

She glanced approvingly at Mrs. Carr, who had donned her travelling dress. It was of biscuit-coloured cloth, somewhat elaborately braided; the fit and style were irreproachable, and she looked even handsomer in its severe simplicity than in her rich and modish Park costume of the morning.

"Don't change your gown; there won't be time," said Mrs. Carr. "We'll walk to the Oratory; it's not far."

Joan nodded, and left the room, followed by the captain's admiring gaze.

### CHAPTER XIII.

"THEN SHE PLOTS, THEN SHE RUMINATES, THEN SHE DEVISES."

FROM a first-class carriage window of the 11.40 express from Paddington three very radiant and good-tempered faces looked farewell to the bustling platform and the smoky chimneys of the great caravanserai beyond.

"One's departure from and entrance into London are not calculated to impress one with the beauty of that city," observed Mrs. Carr, as she loosened her light alpaca dust-cloak. "But what can you expect of a nation who have crowded their national opera-house into the filthiest of slums, and given it a market as a companion, and who have scarcely a theatre with a decent entrance to it? All the public buildings in London, from the Mansion House to the Albert Hall, are an outrage to taste and beauty. They lack space, position and architectural fitness. As for our railway stations—heavens! what must foreigners think of us, coming from Paris, Vienna, Petersburgh, Italy, and arriving at Cannon Street, or Victoria?"

"We have only one excuse," said Captain Talbot—"want of space."

"No," said Mrs. Carr; "it comes from national meanness and a bad beginning. The English always think when a thing is once done it must be left as it is. And the first point raised when there is any question of improving or building a public edifice is not its fitness or beauty, but its expense and if it is really wanted. The British taxpayer would rather have been than beauty any day."

"I shall have to pay a visit to Ireland some day in self-

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defence," said the captain, "and then I may be able to turn the tables on you, Mrs. Carr."

"Well, don't do as a certain member of Parliament did—go over to Kingstown for ten days, and then profess to understand the habits, nature, grievances and requirements of the entire Irish nation."

"Perhaps he had read up their history beforehand," observed the captain, "and simply went on the ground for a little bit of 'local colour.' I have heard of that gentleman from your niece.'

Mrs. Carr's face was a study in contempt. She glanced out of the window and saw Ealing station gliding by.

Joan was turning over the leaves of a magazine. The seats were littered with book-stall contributions, provided by Captain Talbot while waiting their arrival.

"What sort of country is the West of England?" she asked presently. "Not flat and level like Kent, I hope. That is the only part of rural England I have seen."

Captain Talbot waxed enthusiastic over descriptions of moor and valley, hill and coombe; of green lanes and smiling rivers and seaside nooks; of the beauty of the Exe and Dart; of lovely Torbay; of the romantic and historical interest that had made Devon famous since the days of Good Queen Bess.

Mrs. Carr listened and wondered a little at his enthusiasm. He was not wont to get excited about anything, and scenery seemed to her the last thing to rouse him from his ordinary composure.

"Ah, now, it can't beat Killarney, captain," she said at last with a soupçon of the Irish accent he loved. "Of course, we all think our native place the finest in the world. Perhaps it's a good thing we do. It accounts for guide-books, at all events. Still, for my part, people interest me more than places, and I'd sooner hear a bit of gossip than be shown the finest scenery in the world."

"Don't you believe her, Captain Talbot," said Joan. "She's as fond of nature as I am myself, or she used to be. I can't believe a few seasons in London have altered her."

Mrs. Carr's expressive face clouded slightly. She turned again to the window, and enlivened them for a few moments by animadversions on the vulgar effrontery of advertising enterprise, which had taken it into its head to desecrate the summer

landscape by a hideous and blatant puffing of pills and soaps and tooth-powders, that had already wearied one to death in the pages of monthly periodicals, and the picture galleries of omnibuses.

"Didn't I say the English nation were utterly without taste, or sense of artistic fitness?" she exclaimed in disgust. "Just look there!"

They followed her gesture to where the gliding river stole between its green banks and stunted alders, embellished by notice boards containing manifold allusions to the ills that "flesh is heir to."

"If anything would keep me from touching one of those things," she went on, "it would be such a mode of advertising them. Really, the Government ought not to allow it."

"The Government has more important matters to think of," said Captain Talbot, amused at her indignation. "But certainly, as you said, the intelligent foreigner must find a good deal to surprise him in 'merrie England.'"

"How far do these unsightly objects follow us?" asked Joan. "All along the line?"

"Oh, no; we lose sight of them presently. I fancy these fields were not very productive, and so the owners took to utilising them in this fashion. We are only a nation of shop-keepers, you know, Miss O'Rourke, and have to pay the penalty of that reputation by the absence of any sense of artistic fitness."

Joan laughed and returned to her *Idler*. Mrs. Carr drew down the blind to shut out the offensive objects which had so offended her, and took up the *World* for consolation. Captain Talbot opened the *Times*, emboldened by this example.

It was not possible, however, for Mrs. Carr to remain long without talking when there was anyone to talk to within hearing distance.

Having spent ten minutes in scanning the fashionable news and learning what society had done the past week, and was about to do in the present, and had arranged for the future, she threw down her paper, and the captain felt constrained to do the same.

They occupied corner seats opposite each other; a more convenient arrangement for communication than if they sat side by side.

- "Where do we stop next?" asked Mrs. Carr, when Swindon had been left behind.
  - "At Bath," answered the captain.
- "I always think of the School for Scandal—no, The Rivals, wasn't it?—when I hear of Bath," said Mrs. Carr. "I have never stayed there. But then I would never winter anywhere except on the Riviera, if I had the chance. What a pity it is that all the pleasant things in life are so expensive! I know all the things I like are."

These were the speeches that made Captain Talbot wondersometimes if Mrs. Carr would be as safe a wife as she was a charming companion.

"Tell me, captain," she went on, as if indifferent to his silence, "what sort of people shall I meet at Coombe Ditton? You know congeniality is my strong point; but I do hope they're not stiff and goody-goody. Now, if you could just give me a few hints, it would be such a help."

"Well, they're not a bit like your smart London friends," said Captain Talbot. "There's Sir Lucas and Lady Pollock. Sir Lucas is my godfather, and a very good specimen of our old Devon gentry. There's Admiral Dennison and his wife, and his brother, Colonel Dennison. The two Mrs. Dennisons are very handsome women in different styles, and great rivals, so I hear, in point of dress and entertaining."

- "Ah," said Mrs. Carr, delightedly, "that looks promising."
- "And the Haman-Smythes," he went on, "they're immensely rich and have bought a magnificent place overlooking the harbour. He wants to get into Parliament, I believe. She, Mrs. Haman-Smythe, is somewhat vulgar and pretentious. They have three daughters, I think, and one son who has a taste for acting and circuses; then there's the clergyman."
- ".Oh, we'll leave him out," said Mrs. Carr quickly. "They're generally cut out on one pattern, like their clothes."
- "And about half a dozen doctors, two of whom are very popular and go everywhere; they play tennis, get up capital picnics, and are both unmarried."

Mrs. Carr thought of Joan and then asked if Sir Lucas Pollock had no family? It was a disappointment to hear only of a married son in the Civil Service, now in the Madras Presidency.

- "Well, any more?" she went on after a moment's consideration.
- "A few quiet, unpretentious folk, much given to gardening and church duties—oh, and I forgot—two old maiden ladies, very exclusive and particular; they live in a beautiful old house full of historical interest. It is only about a quarter of a mile from your own place."
  - "You know St. Petrox, of course?"
- "Very well indeed. It is a far more pretentious abode than its name conveys, and has a fine position. The last tenant added to and improved it immensely. The hall is charming. I went over it last week when I was down to see that all was in order."
- "You did? Really, Captain Talbot, you are awfully good and thoughtful."

Her handsome face coloured slightly. It struck her that the captain's attentions were really becoming marked.

"Oh, I was on the spot, you see," he said, somewhat awk-wardly. "And I know what agents are. You give them orders, and they either forget, or leave everything to the last moment, and you would have come down to find no coals in the cellar and the garden all in disorder, and ever so many discomforts."

"How far distant is your own place?" asked Mrs. Carr.

She had first heard of St. Petrox through the captain, and opened negotiations with the agent by his advice.

- "About four miles," he answered. "I think I mentioned that."
- "Oh, yes, I remember. It's so horrid landing on new ground among perfect strangers."
- "You will soon be quite at home, I am sure," he answered cheerfully. "The Pollocks are charming people and entertain a great deal. In a few weeks the regatta comes on and the whole place is very festive. Crowds of visitors and yachts come in for it. No doubt some of your London friends may be there, after Cowes and Torbay."
- "Ah! I never thought of that," said Mrs. Carr, brisking up and indulging in rapid visions of luncheon parties at the cottage, or on board the yacht which had been so rashly placed at her disposal.

She felt quite elated at the prospect, and for a few moments gave herself up to the blissful contemplation of "Mrs. Carr" as

hostess to some of the smart contingent from Cowes or Ryde. She had the most perfect of yachting gowns from Redfern's in navy-blue serge with touches of scarlet, and a dream of a hat with white wings and white tulle, in which she didn't look a day over thirty. If only Lady Kate would be there to see her!

She grew so absorbed that Captain Talbot returned to his *Times*, and only put it down as the train rushed into the Bath station.

The scenery did not possess strong points of interest, and Bristol and Taunton were reached in due course.

Captain Talbot seemed to know all the names and histories of the places they passed. He was as good as any guide-book, and far more interesting, Joan declared.

After leaving Taunton the luncheon-basket was produced, and a dainty repast with all necessary table appointments came forth from its interior, complete, even to serviettes and salt.

Mrs. Carr's high spirits began to resume their sway, and the captain thought he had never enjoyed a meal so much in his life. The sandwiches were delicious, the cold chicken as delightful as the salad which appeared from some mysterious receptacle, accompanied by a prepared dressing on which the hostess greatly prided herself. The claret was wonderfully cool, and as excellent as everything else, and his admiration for Mrs. Carr as a woman not too good "for daily needs of daily life," once more swept away those little chills of doubt and fear which at times disputed its sway.

A pause of seven minutes at Exeter gave them time to take a turn on the platform, while Captain Talbot indulged in a cigarette, and bought some views of the Cathedral and the Guildhall, and the old Castle of Rougemont, for Joan.

When they returned to their carriage she gave her attention to the scenery instead of her book, and insisted on Mrs. Carr following her example.

The Cathedral looked disappointing from the train, but as they sped swiftly on past St. Thomas's and saw the beautiful Exe widening out towards Starcross and Exmouth, Joan grew rapturous.

"Those are the golf links," observed Captain Talbot, pointing out the Warren, with the interest of one for whom the game has charms that few women can understand. 'Oh! and there's the sea," cried Joan, suddenly, as the broad river widened out before them, and the train swept along to Dawlish, following the coast line so closely that the rippling waves seemed almost reachable.

The contrast between the red sandstone cliffs and the blue sea and the green, sloping hills above, struck her as absolutely novel and lovely. Even Mrs. Carr acknowledged that it was "really charming" as she glanced out of the window. They followed the curves of the coast, diving into the temporary darkness of tunnels, chasing shadow with sunlight, under beetling cliffs, on past the stone sea wall of Teignmouth, flashing past the Teign itself, where it swept in from its broad estuary to wash the banks of Shaldon, and eddy under its quaint old bridge; then came the inevitable stoppage at Newton Junction (station dreaded and abhorred of the Devonshire tourist), and a change into another train which was to bear them to their destination.

"We are only ten minutes behind time," remarked Captain Talbot, as they made their way to the branch line train. "That's marvellous."

"It was a beautiful run," said Joan, "especially along by the sea. What is the next part of the journey like?"

"The scenery is picturesque all along," said Captain Talbot.
"Though undoubtedly the prettiest part of the line is what we have just followed. You will catch glimpses of the sea as we pass, but we don't go near it again."

"Then perhaps you will sit down and behave rationally," suggested Mrs. Carr, to whom Joan's enthusiasm had become somewhat wearisome.

Captain Talbot looked surprised. "Didn't you admire it, Mrs. Carr?" he asked with evident disappointment.

"Oh, yes; it was lovely. But I'm getting tired, and it's very fatiguing to be asked to admire something every two minutes, as Joan kept asking me."

"I wish you would have allowed me to get you some tea at Newton," said the captain penitently.

"Tea—at a railway station refreshment room! My dear captain, I'd as soon drink poison. It's a national disgrace the stuff they give, and the price they ask! No, thank you—I've travelled enough to know what to risk and what to avoid—especially avoid."

"Well, you'll soon have your own tea now," said Joan soothingly. "The servants took a case of it down with them."

It struck her that Mrs. Carr seemed a little cross and ill-tempered—for her. She marvelled at the different effect scenery can have upon people while the train bore them along, and her eyes rested with unabated admiration on the green and lovely country through which they passed.

### CHAPTER XIV.

ON NEW GROUND.

"THIS is really charming," said Mrs. Carr.

"It is the loveliest place I ever saw!" exclaimed Joan in rapture.

They were sitting in the most delightful of basket chairs in the most delightful of verandahs, embowered in climbing roses and jessamine, and the luxuriance of honeysuckle and Virginia creeper. Before them stretched a slope of velvety lawn, bordered by hedges of box and escallonia, and at the foot of the hill on which the cottage stood, spread the wide and lovely river, alive with beautiful craft, from the toy yacht of the amateur sailor to the more imposing floating palace of the millionaire, or the racing rivals of regatta entries. On the opposite side of the harbour lay the town itself, white and picturesque in the evening sunshine, and softened into wonderful beauty by the golden haze of distance.

On every side the heavy foliage of full-leaved trees massed itself into depths of shadow and warm tones of colour against the deep blue sky or the deep blue water. Plants and flowers, semi-tropical in their species, grew in wonderful luxuriance about the cottage, and rose-trellissed walks led to delicious nooks, and half hid the glories of the orchard, and the homely products of the kitchen garden beyond.

Mrs. Carr had removed her travelling dress and slipped into a cool, loose tea gown of flowered muslin, smothered in creamy cascades of lace.

She was enjoying her own special brand of tea, and her own favourite kind of cake. She felt rested and comfortable, and perfectly happy—that comprehensive word which describes the rapture of the poet, or the contentment of the labourer alike.

"Yes," she went on, "for a 'pig in a poke' it hasn't turned out half badly. Still, my dear, one can't live only on a view."

"I could, I think," said Joan. "It is restful and delightful and never disturbs or annoys you like the human element."

"Oh, I can't do without the human element," said Mrs. Carr. "It means life, and distraction, and amusement, and all that's worth living for. At present, this is very nice, of course, and the quiet and the air are delightful after Sloane Street. I think the lawn will do very well for tennis, and the hall is really quite charming, or will be when I've touched it up and put a few of my own belongings into it."

"Nolan told me that Captain Talbot had sent in those big Oriental jars, and all the flowers this morning," said Joan, dryly.

"Did he really, now? 'Twas very kind of him. I begin to think Lady Kate was right, and that he really is *tpris* in this quarter."

She laughed softly, and poured herself out another cup of tea.

"I suppose he is very well off," she resumed. "He is sure to call round after dinner to ask if we found everything comfortable. I wonder when he will suggest our going over to his place? I wonder what it is like? I wonder whether it would really be worth while to——"

Joan flashed round rather indignantly.

"Don't! Aunt Bet," she said. "I hate to think of you calculating and scheming about him in that heartless way. He's so good and—and straightforward, and it's so unworthy of you."

"My darling child, one can't afford to have fine feelings when one's in a fix, which is exactly what I am at the present moment. I have paid the first quarter's rent of this house in advance, but goodness knows where I'm to get the next from!"

"Oh, Aunt Bet, and you got all those expensive dresses, and ordered £30 worth of wine, and Fortnum & Mason's things to come down here!"

"That was to provision the citadel," said Mrs. Carr laughing, "and they're paid for, thank goodness! But the dresses aren't. Never mind. Don't look so grave, Joan. I couldn't have the people thinking we were paupers, and I couldn't let myself down to the level of country entertainments; grocer's wines, and a cook who only knows how to roast a joint, or boil a fowl, and

whose sole idea of an entrie is stewed kidneys! My luncheons will be things to be remembered——"

"And paid for," sighed Joan.

"Oh, that must take its chance," said Mrs. Carr. "At least I have paid for the wine, and Fortnum & Mason wouldn't give me any more credit without something further—a big something, too—on account. But I suppose no one here will appreciate their delicacies, and look suspicious at truffles, and consider caviare as "caviare" to their taste. Dear me, Joan, I wish the campaign was opened. It might be great fun after all."

"Well, never mind that now," said Joan. "I want you to come with me and explore the garden. It's perfectly delicious. I've been all over it already."

"What! in this gown!" exclaimed Mrs. Carr. "My dear, I couldn't! Besides, it's much pleasanter to rest and talk. Did you hear Captain Talbot say that the regatta was to take place in three weeks' time?"

"No," said Joan. "But regattas are such stupid things."

"Oh, of course, the racing itself is stupid, unless you happen to own a yacht or a sailing boat. It's not the regatta itself that people go to see, but the women's gowns, and to get luncheons or teas on the crack yachts. There are troops of people who don't know a boat from a barge, but they go to Cowes and wear the initials of the R. Y. S. on their hat bands—goodness knows how they get them."

Mrs. Carr was a little sore on this point, for she had once been to Cowes and found out that she was a nobody for mere want of those magic initials—and hadn't been once invited to the Club, or promenaded the Squadron gardens, and only got on to insignificant yachts for stupid teas, where quite second-rate people came in startling gowns, and everything that was chic and in good style seemed rebuking them in serge and flannel from the balcony of the "Royal London," or seated on the wicker chairs under the elms of the R. Y. S. lawn.

She had made up her mind never to go there again unless under special chaperonage, and that she had not yet achieved.

"I hope this will be different," she went on, following up her train of thought. "But I think Captain Talbot is all right. He says some of the Cowes people come here sometimes. I wonder if Lady Kate will turn up."

"I hope not," said Joan, incautiously.

"Well, I hope she will," said Mrs. Carr. "I'll give a lunch on the yacht, and show her I'm not dependent on her for introductions this time."

It was Lady Kate who had played her that shabby trick at Cowes, and Mrs. Carr had not forgiven it.

Joan looked longingly out at the garden, and thought how true it was that you only brought to a place what you had in yourself. Mrs. Carr seemed to have no rural tastes, and only wanted her London life and London people to fill the pretty cottage with clamour, and sit out on the velvet lawn with their tennis rackets, and drink claret-cup under the trees, and perfume the air with cigarette smoke.

She sighed, and in spite of her aunt's remonstrances moved away from the verandah and went out into the rambling, quaintly-laid-out garden that had so attracted her.

Mrs. Carr watched her. "I wish," she thought, "she were more like me. And she used to be. Have I changed so much—or has she grown keen-sighted?"

Her face lost its expression of gay good humour and grew troubled. The silence and peace around seemed to mesmerise her into quiescence, and her eyes followed the beauty of the changeful sky with something like regret.

"I must marry the captain," she said suddenly; "then I can give her a home and a sure position, and there'll be an end to worries of this sort. After all, it doesn't matter about myself—I've no romance left—but it does matter about her. At least I owe it to her to try and make her future happy; poor girl—poor little Joan!"

She murmured those last words half aloud. The regret and sadness in her voice seemed greater than the subject warranted. That beautiful, graceful girl, lifting her radiant face to the rosehued sky, smiling in contented enjoyment of the beauty around her, scarcely seemed to warrant such compassionate regrets.

But perhaps Mrs. Carr had her own reasons for pity. Perhaps she remembered her own youth and lived it again by the light of Joan's—seeing what it had gained—or missed.

For the first two weeks after their arrival at the cottage their time was spent almost entirely on the water. Captain Talbot had his own boat and rowed them up or down the river, or sailed out to sea—or took them for picnics and teas to lovely nooks, or picturesque villages which he had known from boyhood. There was always some excuse for an excursion, and the excursion was always delightful.

Mrs. Carr was well content with the condition of affairs. She did not want Captain Talbot to propose until her own mind was made up as to his acceptance, but she was not averse to his state of bondage, and found that Joan made a useful third.

After a fortnight of this life a few cards found their way into the great Chinese bowl in the hall, and proved to be from some of the captain's friends in the neighbourhood. He was as good as his word and Mrs. Carr's return visits to the Pollocks and the two Mrs. Dennisons brought an invitation to a dinner-party after she had been three weeks at the cottage. Mrs. Carr's delight and excitement astonished Joan.

"Why," she said, "one would think you had never had the experience of London life and London dinners! I'm sure this will be horribly dull and stupid."

"Ah, Joan," said Mrs. Carr, "you don't understand the art of enjoying life. Don't you see, this is an entirely new phase of it for me. These are not the sort of people I have ever met, or would be likely ever to meet out of their own county. They are quite a new study, and that is what I am anticipating."

Joan laughed.

"Well, I hardly fancy you'll get much amusement out of them," she said.

"Oh, I shall meet the rival sisters, and that's what I'm dying to do," said Mrs. Carr. "The admiral's wife is rather dowdy, I believe, but the colonel's—Mrs Johnnie, as they call her—goes in for great style and airs. I saw her the other day. She is a handsome woman in a certain style—the dairymaid style; fair, good complexion, tall, but decidedly going to flesh, which will ruin her in four or five years more. Thinks herself a classical beauty, I'm sure, and does her hair in a knob to represent Greek art. Fun! why, my dear, there's no end to the fun I shall get out of them all! I wish I knew what to wear. Captain Talbot wouldn't give the least hint. I don't want to be too plainly dressed or they'll think I haven't a decent gown, or too grandly, or they'll say I want to cut them out."

"Wear black velvet," suggested Joan.

"No, it's too hot, and Lady Pollock is sure to wear it too, and a Honiton lace cap. I could swear to it—I know that style. You're all right, of course. There's your white silk. No, I think I'll put on my yellow satin. Yellow suits me so well, and it's not too showy, especially as the dowagers are sure to be in black."

"It's rather—low-necked—isn't it," said Joan, "for a country dinner party?"

"Oh, Nolan will soon put that right," said Mrs. Carr. "A little black lace or a bit of chiffon to fill up to regulation point. One has to be careful when one gets among people who judge your morals by the cut of your bodice. However, I'll take their measure to-night. Fancy dining at seven! Isn't it awful? They are benighted creatures here!"

She took herself off then to give Nolan directions about the alteration of her gown, and Joan took up a book and sauntered down to her favourite nook—a seat under a shady old elm tree, from which she could see the blue water below, and the little steamers plying up and down the river, and the boats of the young cadets belonging to the training ship, and all the passage, and life, and movement of the harbour.

The beauty of the place never palled upon the girl. To her it was always new, and always lovely, and always interesting. Whether gazing down at it from the hillside, or rowing over the sparkling water, or wandering along the road by the side of the estuary to the old castle grounds, she found it alike enchanting. She enjoyed every hour of this free, out-door life, and felt endless gratitude to Captain Talbot for introducing them to it.

"If it had been Scarborough, or Brighton, or Trouville, or Ostend," she thought with a shudder, and felt thankful that Ditton was not in the beaten track of society trampers, and had no pier and no promenade, where perfumed flounces and peroxidized heads, and the rivalry of dress, and the idiocy and heart-burnings of fashion could intrude.

She sat out there till the last moment. Her toilette was always rapidly made. She rarely wore anything but white, which suited her rich colouring and bright hair to perfection. When she went into the hall she saw a basket of lovely Maréchal Niel roses on the table.

- "Who sent these, Wilson?" she asked the housemaid, who was coming downstairs.
- "Captain Talbot, miss. His man brought them a few moments ago."

Joan took the basket in her hand and went to her aunt's room.

Mrs. Carr was nearly dressed, so as to leave Nolan's services free for Joan.

The girl handed her the basket.

- "They match exactly," she said, with a glance at the yellow satin gown.
  - "Where did you get them?" asked Mrs. Carr.
- "Oh, they don't grow in our garden," laughed Joan, "and I think you needn't ask who sent them."
- "But are they for me or you?" And Mrs. Carr turned the basket about to search for card or message. "Oh, here it is," she went on—"Mrs. Carr and Miss O'Rourke. Divided favours, darling. Well, they'll just suit us both, that's one comfort. They'll look lovely against your white silk, and equally well against my yellow gown. He must have robbed his conservatory. But there, hurry off, my dear; you've barely half an hour, and it would be as much as our lives are worth to be late on a first appearance."

### CHAPTER XV.

### A DINNER AND A DISCUSSION.

MRS. CARR had timed their entrance remarkably well. They were neither the first nor last arrivals, and Captain Talbot was on the ground before them.

Lady Pollock, who was in black velvet and Honiton lace, received them very graciously, and introduced them to the admiral's, and then to the colonel's, wife.

The latter was as gracious as any woman can be who is suddenly confronted by one better dressed and infinitely more fascinating, if not handsomer, than herself. But when Mrs. Carr chose to be really nice to one of her own sex it was no use trying to be stiff, and cold, and haughty. She simply wouldn't see it, and so soothed and smoothed her rival's ruffled feelings that she became quite pleasant, and the mauvais quart d'heure before dinner was announced, passed off in unbroken harmony.

There were about twenty people present. Mrs. Carr, as the stranger, went in with the host, greatly to the annoyance of the admiral's wife, and much to Sir Lucas Pollock's delight. was a lively old gentleman with an eye for beauty, and he had never met with a woman who made such an excellent dinner companion as Mrs. Carr. Captain Talbot had taken in Joan. He had never seen her in evening dress before, and she seemed a wonderfully lovely vision to him in her soft, shimmering silk, and with a cluster of the yellow roses and their own green leaves at her breast. They were quite old friends now, and she talked as frankly and freely to him as if she had known him for years instead of weeks. Only they rarely discussed people, and she had never asked him for the carte du pays of their new surroundings. She declined soup, and looked round at the different faces, while Captain Talbot manœuvred his moustache over the difficulties of mock turtle.

The dinner was heavy and long, and Mrs. Carr made mental notes of its shortcomings, and thought of what a luncheon she would give in her turn. But, oh! what a heavy, dreary lot they were, and how she missed the sparkle and light talk of a London party under similar circumstances.

The conversation turned on the regatta, at which a royal prince was expected this year, and a contingent of fashionable folk from various places. It was good news for Mrs. Carr, and her spirits rose amazingly. Sir Lucas and his wife were to be on Captain Talbot's yacht for the racing, and she felt she would be quite in the right set.

The Miss Morpeth-Yeos were elderly and somewhat austere-looking ladies. They were considered one of the best old county families, and lived in a style suited to their reputation, and which carried with it all the penalties of dignity, and few of the pleasures of life. They drove about in a lumbering, old-fashioned chariot; they eschewed small bonnets and wide sleeves as frivolous, and looked upon the "bun" as the acme of vulgarity, and they entertained in a stately fashion and at stated times, as befitted family traditions.

The two sisters eyed Mrs. Carr with some disfavour. Her good spirits, her flashing eyes, her rich laugh, her never-failing store of conversation, her perfectly unabashed way of treating everyone and everything, seemed to these very proper and self-

conscious people as the intrusion of a foreign element. Never in their memory had a dinner-party at Sir Lucas Pollock's been so brilliant—they called it noisy. Never had jest and laughter, rippled so audaciously around that exclusive table, and it all dated from the advent of a stranger—an Irishwoman, and no doubt, a Papist.

"How very severe those two old ladies look," remarked Joan to her companion. "I haven't seen them smile once."

"Oh, the Miss Yeos—Morpeth-Yeos, as they prefer to be called. Yes: they are very dignified old ladies. It is always 'Can any good thing come out of anywhere but Devon?' with them."

"It must be very fatiguing to be so dignified; like walking on stilts all one's life. Don't they ever unbend?"

"There may be occasions when they do," said the captain, but no mere ordinary human being has had the privilege of seeing them at such times."

Joan smiled.

"Miss Yeo looks at Aunt Bet," she said, "as if she were something quite alarming."

"Probably she cannot understand anyone unbending so graciously at a formal dinner-party as Mrs. Carr does," he answered.

"Poor old things!" said Joan, in the innocence of her heart.
"What a pity they can't enjoy life a little."

"That," he said, "is quite a question of temperament. Very few English people possess it. Look at our national holidays for instance. The sole pleasure of the tripper consists in eating and drinking—especially drinking; and his sense of humour consists in vulgar horseplay, which is only prevented from becoming absolutely brutal by police intervention."

"If you saw an Irish fair, or horse show, I wonder what you would say?" observed Joan. "Rowdyism and ruffianism seem to reach their utmost force of expression on those occasions. What a pity no one can teach us the art of universal rational enjoyment."

"We might form a company to do it," said the captain, with a twinkle of amusement in his blue eyes. "If I knew an enterprising promoter, I would suggest it. The shares would be sure to sell. It would be a scheme largely applicable to our national interests."

"You may laugh at me, but it really is very sad to see so much of life misspent," said Joan, as she trifled with a morsel of game on her plate. "There is something radically wrong somewhere, it seems to me."

"Indeed there is," said Captain Talbot, dropping his jesting tone—"very wrong; cruelly, wantonly wrong! And it seems no one's place to attempt to put it right. We call ourselves civilised, and I suppose we are; but there is as much brutality, ruffianism, crime and degradation in our British Isles as if no Christianity had ever been preached there, and no morality taught from our thousands of churches, schools, and institutions."

Joan was silent. These were the problems that so often vexed her young mind; that seemed to show her the precipice over which humanity danced its wanton can-can.

"People's Rights, Unionism, Liberty, Justice—what are they, after all, but catchwords for popularity used by those whose interests they have served?" went on the captain; "pretty baubles thrown from gilded balconies to attract the crowd and please the eye, but powerless to assuage the heart-hunger of a nation, or teach higher motives to its rulers. When the purlieus of Lambeth, Whitechapel and Shoreditch send out their tens of thousands of sottish, brutalised, starving and diseased humanity to mock our streets and disfigure our parks, we are utterly confounded. It becomes as much a question of brute force being mastered by brute force as if we were the most ignorant and uncivilized of nations. Where, then, have legislation and religion really helped? What is there to show beneath the surface hypocrisy of the upper strata of society?—rottenness, degradation, heathenism! Nothing else!"

"You ought to go into Parliament yourself," said Joan eagerly. "Surely, if one honest voice uplifted itself and spoke as you speak——"

"It would mean a vast amount of unpopularity," answered the captain, bitterly. "I have gone through the ordeal of the defeated candidate, so I know something of what it costs a man to utter plain truths from unbiassed motives."

"But won't you try again?"

"Oh, yes; I mean to. Sir Lucas is very anxious I should represent this division, but it is a terrible undertaking!"

Joan was silent.

The rector, who was seated next to her, made some remark as to observing them in church, and asked how long Mrs. Carr intended staying at St. Petrox.

When he heard of half a year's tenancy, he allowed his clerical dignity to unbend to the extent of proposing a call, and inviting Joan's interest in the parish schools.

The girl shook her head.

"I don't think Sunday schools are much use," she said frankly, "and in any case I feel too much need myself of being taught to attempt to teach others."

The Reverend Horace looked at the audacious young speaker with some amazement.

"No use in Sunday schools! My dear young lady, you really surprise me. They are one of our great national benefits. Many a useful and pious working man, not to mention the middle and more educated classes, have dated their success in life from the excellent precepts first inculcated in a village Sunday school."

"And what about the other side of the question?" asked Joan. "I have read in many a newspaper that prisoners and criminals have confessed to the chaplains that they date their first false start in life from the contradictory teaching and hypocrisy they learnt in the village Sunday school. You see there are such things as female teachers and attractive curates, and a personal motive may enter into even such a very excellent way of passing Sunday afternoon."

The rector turned away in disgust to help himself to ice pudding that was rapidly melting. He wondered who this very outspoken young lady could possibly be and felt thankful that his own pious, ill-favoured daughter had no advanced notions about anything.

Captain Talbot had listened with some amusement to the brief controversy. He knew the rector, who was a pompous and selfish man. His wife could not agree with him, and so they had separated in an amicable manner on the plea of her ill health and requiring bracing air. His daughter was alike dreaded and disliked by reason of a tendency to interfere with the domestic concerns of the parish generally; she also enforced rigorous rules and attendance at the parish schools, and supplied stale buns and wholesome but unpalatable comestibles for the annual treat.

Such excellent virtues as these, however satisfactory to the possessor thereof, are not always calculated to make them popular with persons of a less rigorous code of morals, and Miss Bufferton was decidedly unpopular in the parish generally, and a "thorn in the flesh" to long-suffering curates.

But she was far too excellent and self-satisfied to be daunted by such a trifle. The Loyolas and Luthers of the world have always had to fight against prejudices!

The rector spoke no more to his companion, being of that essentially clerical nature which loves not rebuff, and shuns any reasonable explanation of its dogmas, and resents to the bitter end any outside criticism of its duties, however performed or understood.

He possessed an excellent digestion, and partook in a self-sacrificing manner of every viand in its turn. Joan marvelled at the apparent voracity of an appetite which assuredly could never have contented itself with "loaves and fishes," and was thankful when the signal to leave the room released her from his appreciation of hot-house peaches and Muscatel grapes, and rich old Burgundy, all of which he was devouring as she rose from her chair.

· "How did you get on?" whispered Mrs. Carr, as chance brought her beside Joan, while the black satin trains of the Misses Morpeth-Yeo rustled along before them.

"Oh, very well," said the girl, smiling, "only I'm afraid I've offended the rector."

"Gracious! I hope not—we can't get on without the Church—not in country society. They're so frightfully orthodox. You really must not be so outspoken, Joan. It makes you seem so odd and unlike other girls."

Joan said nothing. She had begun to think she was unlike "other girls"—girls she had met in society—girls who were one thing in public and another, and very different thing, by themselves. Girls who had their toilet secrets and their complexion washes, and who owed their milk-white necks and arms to balm of Gilead or milk of roses. Girls who wore corsets at night to keep their waists in wasp-like attenuity, and suffered martyrdom from pinched shoes, and never would wear anything but the garb of a circus-rider under their gowns, because of their figures! Girls who were artful and artificial, and vain, and who

sacrificed health for fashion, and love for wealth, and were full of petty vanities and rivalries that seemed contemptible to a larger mind.

Different from other girls! She sat a little apart from those women in the big, old-fashioned drawing-room, and looked at them all, and thought they too had once been girls like herself. They were women now. Women with fads, and vanities, and little petty ambitions, and full of their own self-importance, and standing resolutely upon the pedestal of their own dignity. How strange it seemed. How strange was life! And if the last trump sounded now, at this moment, how would all these people meet it? How would they look? What would they say? Where would they go?

"My dear," said a voice near her—an old voice, but with a kindly, pleasant ring in its tones—"excuse my asking, but I have been watching your face intently for the first five minutes, and I was wondering what you were thinking about?"

Joan started and flushed slightly. The youngest Miss Morpeth-Yeo was speaking to her.

She was a shade less stately and self-assertive than her sister and had even been known to unbend and become quite genial when away from her august presence. She felt a kindly interest in young creatures of both sexes, and had been suspected of actually nursing a baby belonging to one of the villagers. Joan's lovely, grave face had strangely attracted her, and she had slipped across to the vacant chair beside her, with the desire of forming her acquaintance.

The girl's frank eyes met her own with some natural embarrassment. Truth was, of course, a commendable virtue, but to tell this dear old-fashioned dame that she had been speculating as to the appearance of the present company, supposing the Last Judgment were suddenly announced—well, it seemed as if truth might for once veil itself in diplomacy.

"I was wondering," she said, "about these—these people; about their lives and interests."

The sweet old face—lined and grave, and serene with the dignity of years, and the long-acknowledged superiority of descent—looked more than surprised at such an answer.

She was silent for a moment, and then she too followed the girl's eyes, and watched the different faces. She looked at Lady

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Pollock—flushed, stout—in eager converse with Mrs. Carr—at her sister talking in dignified accents to Mrs. Dennison, senior, while Mrs. Johnnie was gossiping with a young-old lady of somewhat meretricious appearance whose father was the fashionable doctor of Coombe Ditton—Miss Addie Larking by name; at Mrs. and Miss Haman-Smythe, sitting a little apart, and looking as vulgar and pretentious as gorgeous dresses and the assurance born of unlimited wealth alone could achieve. The youngest Miss Yeo could not bear the Haman-Smythes. They were intruders; they were parvenus; they were new, and gilded, and in every way objectionable. Of course, the county had to notice them; it was impossible to avoid it, when they had built so magnificent a mansion, benefited the church and local charities in quite a lord-mayorish fashion, and were to be seen everywhere in Coombe Ditton.

"You are quite a stranger here, I believe," said Miss Patience Yeo, after that scrutiny. "I suppose new faces do interest you a little. Now, we have been here so long that these people have lost all novelty for us."

"But not all interest, I suppose?" said Joan.

Miss Patience Yeo smiled the faint, superior smile of one whose antecedents have placed her above the mere everyday necessity of feeling interested in her fellow-men.

"Ah, my dear," she said, "the good old families are fast dying out, or degenerating by inter-marrying with wealthy nobodies. With the exception of Lady Pollock, all these people here are quite second-rate. We could not have allowed ourselves to know them twenty years ago. But times have changed, and we too are compelled to change some of our old prejudices. Ah, I see Miss Larking is going to sing. She is supposed to have a good voice. Myself, I am no judge. I only know it is a very powerful one!"

### CHAPTER XVI.

#### CATS AND DOGS.

MISS ADDIE LARKING was always asked to sing, and she always did so. On the present occasion her voice rang out in an entreaty to someone to "come," for her arms were empty, in a manner that certainly justified Miss Patience Yeo's de-

scription. It was powerful enough to have summoned any defaulter to her side, if only to silence her.

Mrs. Johnnie Dennison had constituted herself the friend and champion of this young lady out of sheer opposition to her sister-in-law, who hated her energetically. Addie was somewhat of a character in her way. Her family were really excellent, and had been connected with the best people in the county for many generations. But Addie's mother had been a somewhat curious person, and had snapped her fingers at dignity and laughed in the faces of prim old dowagers, and refused their invitations and gone "her own gait" in defiance of remonstrance. Finally, she had departed the life, not of humanity, but of Coombe Ditton, with an adventurous Frenchman, who had fallen in love with her ample charms and utter indifference to morals. Addie was then sixteen. At present she was thirtyfive, but the cloud of that early scandal had seriously damaged her prospects in life, and her father had held her in such rigorous bondage that she had never been able to "call her head her own," as she lucidly expressed it.

A would-be demure manner contrasted oddly with her "madeup" face and tinted hair, her attempts at slang, her risque stories and general appreciation of the male sex. Whatever she may have been at home, under guard of the parental eye, Addie Larking was a very different sort of person abroad.

As advancing years lessened her matrimonial chances, they also sharpened her tongue, and gave a keener edge to her malice and her unconcealed dislike of the county and everything connected with it.

Coombe Ditton and Ditton itself were set apart both by rivalry and situation. The river divided them as effectually as their mutual jealousies. The haut-ton lived on the Coombe Ditton side, and only knew their neighbours by sight, or to the extent of a frigid bow at some entertainment less exclusive than popular. Ditton, on the other hand, frisked and kicked up its heels at its own sweet will, and laughed at its neighbour's superiority, and gave its own dances and dinners, and frolicked at the regatta to its heart's content, and patronised fairs and circuses and theatrical entertainments, and made much of the cadets and naval officers, who decidedly preferred that side of the river to the other. The Coombe looked on and shrugged

its haughty shoulders, and drew aside its old-fashioned skirts, and frowned, from under purely "county" hats that were fearful to behold, at the feathers and flowers and ribbons, fluttering as head-gear above the fringes and tousled locks of its less exclusive sister.

Addie Larking much preferred the social to the select side. She delighted in the youthful lieutenants, and amused the officers and went to all the dances, and frisked and frolicked, and was not always too particular about the brand of champagne, or the amount she drank. Of late Mrs. Johnnie, the wife of the colonel, had taken her up, and her father could not well object to such chaperonage.

Colonel Dennison was at the head of the yeomanry corps at Ditton, and the owner of much heavily-mortgaged property which he watched keenly as ultimate possessor. His brother, the admiral, lived on the Coombe side of the river, but was not so well off, neither rejoiced in so imposing a residence.

The colonel, who had the financial instincts of a stockbroker, and the meanness of a Scotchman, had secured a property belonging to one of the famous old families of South Devon. Owing partly to misfortunes, partly to extravagance, Yeovil Court had come to the hammer at last, and been secured, sub rosa, by the colonel.

The admiral and his wife were furious when they heard of it, so much so that it was supposed they also had had their eve upon the property. It was gall and wormwood to Mrs. Dennison to see her sister-in-law queening it in the beautiful old rooms of the Court, where the oak panels and ceilings were things of history, and the crests of the original owners were emblazoned on the magnificent carvings of the dining-room. some marvellous trick of heraldry, these same crests actually proved to be identical with that of the Dennisons. events, a boar's head and a fox's present little difference at a distance, and became quite natural in their resemblance under the hands of a skilled artisan in mediævality. When the old summer-house had been pulled down, it was found to possess oaken panels under its coats of whitewash, and these proved so valuable that Mrs. Johnnie had them manufactured into cabinets and shelves for her boudoir, with the addition of modern carving disguised by modern oak staining. Her friends saw only the result, and never suspected that what looked like a ninety-guinea cabinet really owed its design to a country carpenter, who had worked under Mrs. Johnnie's directions, aided by a natural talent.

It was to this lady that Mrs. Carr felt strongly attracted, and about whom she had gathered all possible information from Lady Pollock, with the exception of the discovery of the oak summer-house.

When her hostess moved away to chat with the admiral's wife, Mrs. Carr turned towards Mrs. Johnnie, and opened fire by warm praise of her friend's singing. Mrs. Johnnie fell into the snare. It soon appeared that she also sang—to the accompaniment of the guitar. There was an amateur string band in Ditton, and Mrs. Johnnie was head and chief of its tinkling members.

Mrs. Carr was overjoyed. She loved guitars and banjosabove all other instruments, and professed quite an ardent longing to hear the next concert which was given annually for the benefit of the local infirmary.

Mrs. Johnnie declined, however, to give any specimen of her talents to-night, and presently Lady Pollock came sailing up to Mrs. Carr again, to ask if Joan would sing.

"I have heard of her voice from Eustace," she said, which, indeed was true, for Captain Talbot had raved about Joan's singing in and out of season.

Mrs. Carr said that Joan would no doubt favour them, if asked, but that she only sang little trumpery Irish ballads which would scarcely interest them after Miss Larking's brilliant, bravura style.

All the same she watched with no small interest the effect of Joan's pathetic voice, even as she secretly admired the girl's unaffected acquiescence in Lady Pollock's request.

As she drew off her gloves and seated herself at the instrument, with no music before her, Miss Addie's green eyes clouded and her smiling lips grew sullen.

"Done for effect, of course," she muttered to the Haman-Smythes, by whom she was seated.

Miss Haman-Smythe, who had no accomplishments, except an idiotic smile and a wasp waist, which was supposed to have weakened her intellectual as well as her natural development, simply agreed. She generally did agree with everyone; it saved so much trouble, and girls who have to think of their waists find their time fully occupied.

Meadwhile, unconscious of effect and heedless of criticism, Joan began to sing, "Oft in the Stilly Night."

If no one else in the room appreciated the song or the voice, at least Miss Patience Yeo did both. For once dignity was laid by, and her heart showed its natural feelings. Her delicate, wrinkled, old face flushed, and her eyes grew strangely dim. She thought she had never heard anything so exquisite in her life, and said so, frankly.

"Isn't it beautiful, Melita?" she exclaimed, as Joan rose from the piano.

"It is, sister," said the eldest Miss Morpeth-Yeo. "I have heard nothing like it since I was a girl and went to London with our father to hear Jenny Lind. I saw you talking to that young lady," she went on. "Who is she—niece, or daughter, or something to that very noisy person in the yellow gown?"

"Niece," said Miss Patience, "and such a charming girl, sensible and unaffected. I am sure you would like her, sister."

Miss Morpeth-Yeo affixed her glasses and gazed critically at Joan, who was standing by the piano receiving Lady Pollock's thanks and praises, which were admirably seconded by Mrs. Admiral Dennison, who was delighted that her sister's friend had been "snuffed out," as she afterwards described it.

"She has a good presence and seems unaffected," she answered.
"You may introduce her to me, sister. But I don't like the Irishwoman. I wish to keep her at a distance."

"Their cottage grounds just touch our boundary," said Miss Patience. "It will seem very unneighbourly to avoid them."

"We can afford to be unneighbourly," said the eldest Miss Morpeth-Yeo, sternly. "We have our family dignity to keep up. These nobodies of yesterday ought to learn their place."

Miss Patience said nothing, but catching Joan's eye at that moment she signed to the girl to return to her old place, and then presented her in due form to her sister.

"Your voice is very charming, Miss O'Rourke," said the eldest Miss Yeo, graciously. "What was that you sang?"

"One of Moore's melodies," answered Joan. "I rather favour my national ballads. I think I know most of them by heart."

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"Ah!" said Miss Yeo, coldly. "I know nothing about your country, I am afraid. I—I have never met an Irish person before"

She said it much as she might have said, "I have never met a Hawaiian islander, or an Esquimaux before."

Joan was amused. It did not offend her in the least. She had quite a past-century reverence for old people, and her manner only took an added shade of gentle deference as she spoke of her country, its shortcomings and its virtues, to this stately and important person.

That manner, so different to Addie Larking's boisterous gaiety, or the county stiffness, or the ordinary dull propriety of their social circle, forced Miss Yeo into comparisons in spite of her prejudices. She kept Joan beside her, although the gentlemen had come in, and she had an important matter to discuss with the rector.

"You must come to see us sometimes," she said at last, to the amazement of Miss Patience. "We rarely pay calls, but perhaps you will not stand on ceremony. Just run across from your garden, and cheer an hour for us by a song or two. It will be a kindness to two dull, old-fashioned folks, I assure you."

"Indeed, I will do it gladly," exclaimed Joan. "I have so often admired your lovely grounds."

"They are considered very fine," said Miss Yeo, graciously. "Our roses are quite the sight of the garden. Of course they are almost over now; but we have every variety of dahlia, and chrysanthemums to follow. The conservatory, too, has many beautiful specimens of west country flora, if you are interested in horticulture at all."

She bowed graciously, and then turned to the rector, who was hovering near. Addie Larking had secured Captain Talbot, of whom she was secretly enamoured, and Sir Lucas had again returned to the side of Mrs. Carr. The admiral and his brother stood together discussing politics. The Haman-Smythes and Dr. Larking were talking of the regatta.

Mrs. Carr began to feel she had had enough of it, and telegraphed with her eyes to that effect to Joan. At that moment, however, Lady Pollock came up to her to beg for one more song, and Sir Lucas, hearing of it, crossed over to take her to the piano.

. "It is a treat to hear any good music here," he said, "so don't

be unkind to us. Your aunt will stay five minutes longer if you will sing."

Joan hated making a fuss. Once more she drew off her gloves. Once more the fair Addie's visage took upon it an expression of the "soured" milk of human kindness as Captain Talbot rose unceremoniously and walked over to the piano. Once more Mrs. Johnnie bit her lip, and turned her Grecian profile ostentatiously away from the group who were making such a fuss over the new girl; and once more did Mrs. Admiral Dennison chuckle over her sister's discomfiture, and prepare sugared phrases of condolence for her ears in the bitter by-and-by.

Joan sang even better than she had done on the first occasion. There could be no possible question as to the impression she made. Every man there, with the exception of the rector, who had not forgiven her remarks at dinner, felt an odd sensation in throat or eyes as he listened to the tender pathos of words and voice, and watched the beautiful young face, whose varying expression gave even greater charm to the song.

Joan sang "She is Far From the Land." It seemed as if the beauty of the music set free some imprisoned sorrow in her own soul that found its best expression there. There are mysteries within us of which the breath of music alone gives hints, for music alone means more than it says, and passion, and grief, and longing, and unrest find their best, if saddest interpretation in its mournful harmonies.

A murmur went round the room, but the faces expressed more than the words, and when Joan looked up and caught the expression in Captain Talbot's eyes, she felt she had received a higher tribute than a million thanks could have paid.

But there is nothing so metallic as the senses of jealous women, and Addie Larking felt she hated Joan with all the force of her narrow, self-bound soul, while Mrs. Johnnie looked past and away from her as if unconscious of so insignificant a presence, and resolved never to invite her to Yeovil Court, whatever her sister or Lady Pollock thought of it.

"It was a great success—a great success," murmured Mrs. Carr, delightedly, as the hired fly bore them back to the cottage. "Of course some of those old cats are ready to scratch our eyes out, but that's of no consequence. We'll show them we don't

care, and that'll rile them more than anything. Lady Pollock is delighted with you, and Sir Lucas with me, and that's all I wanted. By the bye, what were the two old ladies so sweet to you for? I was so glad. They're the best family here, I'm told."

"Miss Patience is a dear old thing," said Joan. "They've asked me to drop in unceremoniously—across the garden way—and sing to them now and then."

"And do it by all means," said Mrs. Carr. "I'm not thinskinned, and not easy to offend. If they like you, and don't like me, it's not my loss. Somehow you always do get on with old people. Of course you must go, my dear. They're quite the people of the place. What a hateful cat that Dennison woman is; spite and ill-temper are written in every curve of her mouth -a precious big one it is, too! I wasted half my evening trying to get into her good graces and thaw her chilliness, and after all she never so much as said a civil thing. The men are quite on our side, though. Aren't we like cats and dogs?" and she laughed heartily. "But the dogs are honest and faithful, at least, and show that they like you, and are to be depended on. The cats (bad luck to them!) are suspicious and sharp-eyed, and sharpclawed, too, and if they purr to you one moment, are quite as ready to scratch you the next. Never mind, we'll see what the regatta will bring forth."

(To be continued.)

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# La bonne Josephine.

By L. E. TIDDEMAN.

"HAPPY is the woman who has no history!" There may be truth in these words, yet the eventful lives are those that interest us most, and viewed in this light that of Marie Rose Joseph Tascher de la Pagerie (commonly called Joséphine), has a special She was but sixteen, and fresh from a convent, charm for us. when she was offered as bride, in lieu of her sister, who shrank from leaving her island home at Martinique, to Alexandre de Beauharnais. It was a family arrangement, a union between the two houses being deemed desirable; the young officer was attracted to her at the first interview, although a little reluctant to abandon a dissipated life in order to assume the bonds of matrimony. Their wedding took place however in December 1779, and the girl wife, though the powers of fascination for which she afterwards became so celebrated were yet undeveloped, soon succeeded in winning her husband's love. But Paris, that gayest of all cities, proved too attractive for youth and inexperience, and justifiably or otherwise (it would be hard to say which) the jealousy of her husband was aroused.

When his little son was but a year old, Beauharnais repaired to Martinique, with the view of instituting personal enquiries into the past history of his wife.

We can hardly be surprised at the indignation expressed by Joséphine's father when writing to his son-in-law, he says:

"This then is the fruit of your voyage, and the fine campaign you were to fight against the enemies of your country; it has ended in a war against the reputation of your wife, and the tranquility of her family."

In the teeth of this reproof Beauharnais returned to France, applied for a divorce and obtained it, the decision being that there were faults on both sides. But since the Marquis de Beauharnais, Alexandre's eldest brother, and his aunt sided with the wife against the husband, and taking into consideration the fact that the young couple were subsequently reunited, it is not

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unreasonable to suppose that Joséphine may have been falsely accused. During their separation Beauharnais had turned his attention to politics, and occupied the position of President of the National Assembly when the unfortunate Louis XVI. and his wife fled from Paris.

On this occasion he turned to his colleagues, and without any display of surprise or emotion, he made the announcement.

A little later he resumed his military duties, became Commander-in-Chief, and gained universal respect on account of his courage, coolness and devotion to duty. Yet he failed to satisfy the Revolutionary authorities, was accused of deficiency of courage, and dismissed the service. He belonged to the old régime, blue blood ran in his veins; no wonder that he failed to find favour with the reigning powers.

It is impossible to realise the disappointment of the zealous leader, removed so suddenly from the stage which he had trodden for so brief a period. Yet he took his farewell bravely and with dignity.

"My first duty is to think of my army and my country," writes he. "The decree which removes me is final, and even a victory, which appears to me an impossibility, would not be pardoned. We have only 35,000 disorderly men to oppose 80,000 troops. My death would remedy nothing, I must take my departure."

We see him next in prison, facing death with the courage and calm which characterised the victims of the Reign of Terror. The words he penned to his wife are full of a patient endurance.

"Je mourrai, avec le calme qui permet pourtant de s'attendrir pour de plus chères affections, mais avec ce courage qui caractérise un homme libre, une conscience pure et une âme honnéte, dont les vœux les plus ardents sont pour la prospérité de la République. Adieu, mon ami, console—toi par mes enfants. Console—les en les éclairant et surtout en leur apprenant que c'est à force de vertu et de civisme qu'ils doivent effacer le souvenir de mon supplice, et rappeler mes services et mes titres à la reconnaissance nationale. Adieu; tu sais ceux que j'aime. Sois leur consolation, et prolonge par tes soins une vie dans leur cœur. Adieu, je te presse ainsi que mes chers enfants, pour la dernière fois de ma vie, contre mon sein."

Joséphine lay in the Carmelite prison while her husband

awaited his fate. For a while she retained her habitual vivacity in spite of adverse circumstances, nay, she even made material for laughter out of the reverses of fortune, and the sweetness of her nature asserted itself. Her own words represent her attitude most faithfully.

"I speak to everyone, and everywhere find hearts to console and misfortunes to pity." Her own were indeed heavy, but she bore up bravely, until the news of her husband's condemnation reached her. It affected her physically; when she should have mounted the scaffold the doctor who attended her declared that it was impossible, she was too weak to stir, two days would be the limit of her life. Meanwhile the fall of Robespierre was imminent, and when it was compassed the Reign of Terror ceased, the prison doors were opened wide, and the fair Creole stepped forth once more, a widow with two children dependent upon her, and her property confiscated.

It is said that Napoleon Buonaparte's first introduction to Joséphine happened when he was Commandant of Paris, when her boy, then about twelve years of age, craved the restoration of his father's sword; entering the dreaded presence in fear and trembling, and weeping tears of joy as he received the weapon. It is said also that, in gratitude for Buonaparte's kindness to the lad, Joséphine presented herself before him, that she charmed him by her beauty, by her grace, and by the ineffable sweetness of her manners. It is a pretty story, not unworthy of credence, since Bourrienne has thought fit to repeat it. If further verification be required we have the words of Eugène de Beauharnais himself.

"My mother conceived the idea of marrying General Buonaparte, I myself was the cause of their interview, etc."

That the marriage was one made from love it would be idle to deny, else were the conqueror the most consummate of hypocrites, for surely no sentimental poet ever wrote more glowing love letters than those which have been handed down to us. So passionate was the affection felt by the warrior of twenty-six for his bride (his senior by seven years), that he covered whole sheets of letter paper with his doubts and fears, his pangs of jealousy, his transports of delight.

And his wife, fascinated, though her heart's depths were not yet stirred, marvelled a little over the frantic adoration that

breathed in each florid epistle. The warrior, on the eve of battle seizes his pen and breaks forth in a frantic appeal.

## "My only Joséphine,-

"Away from you there is no happiness; away from you the world is a desert in which I stand alone, with no chance of tasting the delicious joys of pouring out my heart. You have robbed me of more than my soul, you are the sole thought of my life. If I am worn out by all the torment of events and fear the issue, if man disgusts me, if I am ready to curse life, I place my hand on my heart—your image is beating there."

A letter such as this, full of faith and fervour, was frequently followed by one teeming with mistrust and jealousy. Later on came passionate entreaties for Joséphine to join him in Italy. One of his sternest critics, Madame de Rémusat, who would fain prove that the conqueror had a heart proof against tenderness, is compelled, when considering his attitude towards his wife at this period, to acknowledge that even a Buonaparte could not "escape every feeling."

"Adorable woman," writes the renowned commander, "how great a power you have over me! I am ill with thy complaint, I have again a burning fever. Don't delay the courier more than six hours, and let him return at once with the dear letter of my queen."

Shaking off a passing indisposition which had strengthened a reluctance to leave her beloved Paris, proud to feel how dearly she was loved, and to know that the man in whom all France gloried prized victory for her sake, for had he not said: "I care for honour because you care for it, for victory because it brings you pleasure?" she bade farewell to her many friends and started to join her husband after supping at the Luxembourg with some of her friends, regretting bitterly her little house in the Rue Chantereine, though a palace at Milan awaited her.

She had hardly realised the change in her husband's position, though Paris had rung with his praise. When they met she was struck by what has been described as his "air of victorious superiority, such as belonged to but few kings and princes."

The two were together but a short time, the reunion adding to Buonaparte's impetuous love for his wife. He parted from her reluctantly to follow the trumpet-call of duty.

When the spring of 1797 dawned, Italy was virtually subdued, and Napoleon and his wife were again enjoying one another's company in the Serbelloni palace at Milan. It is pleasant to pause for a while, to forget bloodshed and victory, and to see the hero in this abode of luxury, as Arnault the poet found him.

Here were lofty colonnades, sumptuous drawing-rooms, winding galleries, pillars of shining marble. Here Joséphine reigned queen-like, receiving the homage of the Milanese nobility, as to the manner born. The freshness of her first beauty was over, the dark complexion had lost its warmer tint, and she was fain to supply deficiencies by art. But an infinite grace was hers yet, and the coquetry that was natural to her was called forth by her surroundings.

Buonaparte himself is described as "small in stature, thin, pale, with an air of fatigue," a kindly smile often playing about a mouth usually severe in expression, having a melodious voice, and the power to fascinate. Truly, this must have been the case, since we are told that he could talk for two hours at a stretch, and that although standing, as did his listeners, neither he nor they were conscious of fatigue.

When Joséphine lest Martinique, an old fortune-teller made a singular prophecy:

"You will be more than a Queen!"

The memory of these words must have rung in her ears as she smiled on Vicomte and Vicomtesse, and rehearsed the part which she was to play later on, her eyes shining as brightly as did the diamonds circling her throat and brow. She was overwhelmed with flattery and adulation, but she had realised ere now that her husband's devotion was the proof of her greatest conquest. For Buonaparte was no universal admirer. When in the company of the fair sex he indulged in a brusquerie of manner, accompanied by plain speaking, which, even when we make allowance for the supposed eccentricity of genius, do not commend themselves to us. He would criticise the redness of a lady's arms, upbraid her with regard to a soiled dress, deprecate the colour of her hair. But his wife's costume gave him no cause for complaint, since her taste was exquisite, and

he would snatch an hour from out his busy life to advise as to her toilette, a condescension which must surely have delighted her woman's heart.

In October, 1797, or to use the term then in vogue, on the 26th Vendémiaire, Buonaparte signed the Peace of Campo Formio, and the Italian campaign was terminated. The Duke of Ragusa tells us that no conference had been held at the village, it was merely selected for the signing of the treaty. A whole day was spent in copying the documents; Buonaparte and his companions sat in the drawing-room chatting gaily. At ten o'clock all was ready, and he wrote his name with an air of insouciance that concealed all anxiety.

Yet he trembled lest the treaty should not be ratified, and not without cause. This was however satisfactorily accomplished, and the victorious general received with complacence the congratulations of Talleyrand.

"Peace at last, and peace such as Buonaparte desires. Receive my warmest congratulations, my dear General. The Directory is satisfied, the public delighted, everything is in the best condition. Farewell, peace-making General—farewell, friendship respect, admiration, gratitude, there's no end to the list."

Buonaparte had triumphed, he figured as an example of selfdenial, he was compared to Cincinnatus returning to his plough, yet in reality he had but consulted his own interests, and carried his point in face of opposition.

"The Directory," says Bourrienne, "was far from being satisfied with the treaty of Campo Formio, and with difficulty resisted the temptation of not ratifying it. But all their objections were made in vain. Bourrienne made no scruple of disregarding his instructions."

He left Milan in November, for the congress at Bastadt, and his journey through Switzerland was a succession of triumphs. At Berne, where he arrived at night, a double line of carriages brilliantly illuminated, flanked the road on either side, and fair women smiled upon him as they raised a jubilant cry—"Long live Buonaparte! Long live the Pacificator!" At Bastadt a letter from the Directory awaited him; he was ordered to return to Paris, and thither he repaired, nothing loth. Great preparations had been made for a public reception. The court of the Luxembourg was magnificently decorated the dignitaries occupied

a large amphitheatre specially erected. Facing the entrance stood the statues of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity; all eyes were strained to catch a glimpse of the victorious general. Talleyrand spoke in vain, none cared to listen, all awaited the words of Napoleon. His voice was firm, his manner modest. From the opening syllables, "Citizen Directors," to the concluding phrase—"When the happiness of the French shall be secured on the best practical laws, then Europe will be free," all was distinctly audible. Barras, the regicide friend of Joséphine, and witness at her second marriage, made the answering speech, and saluted the general on both cheeks.

Thus the curtain fell on another scene in the life-drama of Napoleon Buonaparte. He enjoyed a brief period of domestic happiness in the little house in the Rue Chantereine (rechristened Rue de la Victoire at a later date), the house which he had been compelled to quit two days after his marriage, and to which address so many passionate love-letters had been forwarded.

Joséphine had incurred a debt of £8,000 for furniture and draperies, and her husband paid it reluctantly. He lived the life of a citizen, a retiring one to boot, with a view to the maintenance of his popularity with the people. On a Sunday he accompanied his wife and children to the country, in true bourgeois fashion, and was in all respects a model husband. This lasted for some months, when an invasion of England was contemplated, and the task of visiting the ports and overlooking the preparations being carried on there devolved upon Buonaparte. There was much talk about a projected invasion of England; Napoleon opposed the project.

"It is too hazardous," he said to his friend Bourrienne. "I will not attempt it, I will not risk upon such a stake the fate of our beautiful France."

But the thirst for glory, the longing to make fresh conquests, yet burned within him. England could be attacked in another quarter of the world, and so the great expedition to Egypt was undertaken, and the young officer headed it as General-in-Chief of the Army of the East. His successes gained for him the applause of a glory-loving people, he won fresh laurels and wore them gracefully.

"No conqueror," says Bourrienne, "ever enjoyed a victory so

much as Buonaparte, and yet no one was ever as inclined to abuse his triumphs."

Much has been said of Joséphine's levity during his absence, and it is to be feared that her conduct laid her open to severe criticism. Yet we have scant sympathy with Junot, who acted as informant, and less still with the husband who was so ready to condemn, when he himself had thrown off all shackles and lived in open immorality. At this very time, when writing to his brother Joseph, he penned the pathetic words:

"Je te recommande mes intérêts. J'ai beaucoup de chagrin domestique, car le voile est entirement levé."

Meanwhile, the woman who had charmed all, was coldly and unkindly treated by her husband's family, harassed by debt caused by her own extravagance, and outraged by reports of the infidelity of her consort, the man who had envied her lap-dog lest he should become his rival, the lover who had pained her by his jealousy, and charmed her woman's heart by his idolatry. Buonaparte's return from Egypt reads like a romance, wind and tide were in his favour, fortune smiled upon him. At Fréjus, where he landed, the people would not allow him to go into quarantine. "No quarantine for our protector," cried they. "The hero who has come to defend Provence."

At Aix, at Avignon, at Valence, at Lyons, he was fêted, a telegram warned Paris of his approach, and Joséphine hastened to meet him. But as ill luck would have it she took the wrong route, and thus afforded to her husband a fresh cause for complaint. He returned to a solitary home, and when two days later his wife arrived, weary and full of fears, yet with a heart throbbing for very joy at the thought of their re-union, she was refused admittance to her husband's room, and she stood without, filling the house with sobs and unavailing petitions. Then came a reconciliation, hollow enough on Buonaparte's part since he was already scheming for a divorce. We are told by Monsieur Thiers that Napoleon found it impossible to nurse resentment against his wife, on the other hand it appears probable that at this period of his career he found her tact and influence of infinite value, in any case it is certain that during his consulate her charms atoned for his gaucherie, and that he was indebted

to her for many a partisan from the ranks of the old noblesse. Yet gratitude to her did not induce him to restrain his excesses, nor did he appear to obey in his private life any dictate save that of impulse. Meanwhile he resented his wife's jealousy, and his sentiments are best realised by his own words.

"She is always afraid that I shall fall seriously in love, though she must be aware that love is not made for me. For what is love but a passion which leads one to abandon the universe for the object loved. And assuredly I am not of a character to indulge in such exclusiveness."

This from the man who had written: "My dear, do remember to tell me that you are certain that I love you more than can be imagined; that you are convinced that my every moment is devoted to you; that no hour passes that I do not think of you; that it has never entered my mind to think of any other woman; that to me they all lack grace, beauty and intelligence, that you, you as I see you, as you are, can please me and absorb my whole soul, that you have wholly filled it, that my heart has no corners that you do not see, no thoughts that are not subordinate to you," and the like.

Outwardly, however, Buonaparte behaved well to his wife, surrounding her with luxury. But this could not atone for her disappointment at not having a child, for she knew this to be necessary to the fulfilment of her husband's ambition, she knew also that for this cause, above all others, he contemplated a divorce. With this he threatened her after every fresh disagreement, and disagreements were inevitable, infidelity on his part, reckless extravagance on hers necessitated them, and it was not until Buonaparte conceived the project of becoming Emperor that her fears were allayed, then it was but temporarily; ere long he explained to her coolly and in measured tones that it was imperative for the country's sake that they should part. Her first desire, to which she gave voice impetuously, was to retire to Malmaison, and give to her husband the freedom he coveted, second thoughts, however, prevailed, and with a docility that should have moved him, she put herself under his orders, announcing her willingness to descend from the throne at such time as he should deem expedient. Thus it was permitted to Joséphine to stand once more, the observed of all observers, her white satin draperies, daintily

broidered in silver, sweeping the ground. She wore a bandeau necklace and earrings of diamonds, her graceful head crowned by elaborate curls was held proudly aloft, her eyes roamed over the vast assembly in a vain search for sympathy. But neither her beauty nor the recollection of the love he had once borne for her stood in the way of Buonaparte's boundless ambition. The injured wife stooped to remind her husband that his alliance with her had been of infinite value to him from a political point of view, but she did not stoop to conquer. Yet she well-nigh established her old sway over him on one occasion when she paced the room, her arm linked in his, her tear-stained eyes fixed upon his face, while he represented to her that all were urging upon him a separation.

"What say you? Shall it be? What say you, Joséphine?" he questioned.

Her lids drooped, the colour left her cheeks, tears coursed down them. But she answered submissively and with infinite tact.

"What will you have me say, if your brothers, your ministers, all are against me, I have only you to defend me!"

Only you! Alas! poor Joséphine. Her plaintive appeal gained her a few careless kisses, a brief reconciliation, that was all. Napoleon still brooded over the divorce, still nursed the fond hope of founding a new dynasty, and on the 30th of November, 1809, Joséphine's doom was sealed. Her screams rent the air, she sank upon the floor in a deep swoon, the Emperor showed emotion. "His grief," we are told, "was intense." In spite of this assurance our sympathies are not greatly touched, our heart does not melt when we recall the three questions drawn up by the Emperor himself and laid before the council.

I.—Whether it was essential to the interests of the State that he should divorce Joséphine for the purpose of ensuring a successor.

II.—Whether on so doing he should marry a Princess allied to some ancient dynasty in Europe.

III.—Whether a Russian or Austrian Princess would be the most eligible match.

It only remained for the Act of Divorce to be signed, in the meanwhile appearances must be kept up. Fêtes were still continued, Joséphine assisted at them, her pale cheeks rouged, her mouth set firmly. There was a grand function at the Tuileries,

the Emperor wore a plumed hat, the costume he had donned when crowned, Joséphine faced him ablaze with diamonds; on the following day there was a fête of unparalleled magnificence at the Hotel de Ville. This was the last appearance in public of the unfortunate Joséphine.

On December the 16th, she clad herself victim-wise in a simple white robe, laid aside her costly jewels, and pale to the very lips listened to words which struck the death blow to her happiness. She signed the Act with a resolute hand, the Emperor also retained his composure. It was not until she and her husband were alone together that the unfortunate Joséphine broke down. On the following day she quitted the Tuileries for ever, and retired to Malmaison to hide herself from the gaping crowd.

On the 23rd of February Napoleon married Marie Louise, daughter of the Emperor of Austria.

The hopes of the nation rose high, it nursed dreams of unbroken peace, the happy couple were greeted with universal joy. Marie Louise is described as a blonde, with an exquisite complexion, "of a simple and innocent nature, reserved, and made for domestic love."

Joséphine, as one biographer affirms, "had introduced Napoleon to the society of the Faubourg St. Germain, Marie Louise into that of the monarchs of Europe, Versailles and its etiquette flourished once more in France."

Bourrienne's account of his interview with the deposed Empress at Malmaison gives a true picture of the grief into which she was plunged. "She threw herself," says he "on the ottoman on the left of the fireplace, and beckoned me to be seated near her. It was some time before she could sufficiently command her feelings, and her tears still flowed as she said: 'My dear Bourrienne, I have drained my cup of misfortune. He has cast me off! forsaken me. He conferred upon me the vain title of Empress only to render my fall the more marked. Ah! we judged him rightly. I did not deceive myself as to the destiny that awaited me, for what would he not sacrifice to his ambition?'"

Later on when Bourrienne was alone with her, she gave him a description of the last dinner which she partook of in company with her husband, dwelling on his sinister looks and on the dark forebodings that filled her own troubled heart.

"Coming close to me," said she, "'he took my hand, pressed it to his heart, and after gazing at me for a few moments, said, "Joséphine, dear Joséphine, you know I have loved you; to you alone do I owe the only moments of happiness I have tasted in this world. But Joséphine, my destiny is superior to my will; my dearest affections must give way to the interests of France."'"

This interview with Bourrienne occurred a year after the divorce, and yet, as he himself says, "it was still a new theme of grief," none the less so, because Joséphine still took delight in the wearing of jewellery and delicate attire, for which weakness she excused herself pathetically in words addressed to him.

"Why, my dear friend, it is true all these things should be indifferent to me, but it is a habit."

In her retreat at Malmaison many a letter from her husband reached her, urging her to courage, begging her to sleep well for his sake. This correspondence continued until her death, and might not be uninteresting to the student of psychology. Later on when the much desired heir arrived, Joséphine wrote to Marie Louise, as well as to the happy father, with what feelings it would be hard to imagine, nor can we attempt to gauge his sentiments as he penned the few brief lines below.

## "MY FRIEND,-

"I have received your letter and thank you. My son is fat and well, and I hope will thrive. He has my chest, my eyes, my mouth. I continue to be satisfied with Eugène, who has never given me any pain.

"NAPOLEON."

The failure of Buonaparte's hopes brought no joy to Joséphine, she sorrowed over his fall, she sorrowed yet more deeply when she realised that he went to Elba unaccompanied by his wife.

"Although I am no longer his wife," said she, "I would join him to-morrow, did I not fear my presence would be disagreeable to him. It is especially at this moment when he is abanboned by everyone that it would please me to be near him, to aid him to support the dulness of Elba, and to share half his grief. I never so regretted a divorce which always afflicted me."

Here spoke the true woman who had earned for herself the title of la bonne Joséphine. A few days after she had spoken thus, she was seized by a sudden malady, inflammation of the throat, to which she succumbed almost immediately.

On June 2nd, 1814, the Archbishop of Tours preached a funeral sermon, summing up her life and dwelling on her kindness to the poor. "Joséphine," added he, "was not only charitable. If it were permitted for a minister of God at the altar to talk of worldly qualities, I should speak to you, my brothers, of the nobility and grace of her manners, and of that extreme politeness which never deserted her, and which touched us all the more as it had so long ceased to be allied with power."

The statue that stood in Paris to the memory of la bonne Joséphine was cast to the ground by men who could not find words strong enough to express their abhorrence of Napoleon's tyranny, but our hearts are moved with sympathy when we recall her. That her conduct was not beyond reproach is no doubt undeniable, but it is impossible to withhold our pity. Napoleon's biographers have shown themselves anxious to solicit the same on his behalf, we are told that he felt parting with his wife intensely, he himself would have us credit this statement, and poses as a lover of his country, considering the interests of France alone. That his personal advantage was ever his first consideration is however sufficiently manifest. His own words appear as evidence of this.

"Buonaparte," says Emerson, "was singularly destitute of generous sentiments," and this assertion is followed up by a quotation. "There are two levers for moving men, interest and fear; love is a silly infatuation, depend upon it. Friendship is but a name. I love nobody, I do not even love my brothers; perhaps Joseph, a little, from habit, and because he is my elder; and Duroc, I love him too; but why? because his character pleases me: he is stern and resolute, and I believe the fellow never shed a tear. For my part I know very well that I have no true friends. As long as I continue to be what I am, I may have as many pretended friends as I please. Leave sensibility to women; but men should be firm in heart and purpose, or they should have nothing to do with war and government." man who nursed sentiments of this nature could scarcely be supposed to suffer severely through his affections, and in reading them we are tempted to ask ourselves who was most deserving of pity, the woman who shared the splendours of the Tuileries with such a consort, or the lonely occupant of Malmaison weeping over words of tenderness written by the husband of Marie Louise?

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### The Romance of a Store.

"WELL," said McJones, in the long, drawn-out note which was particularly his own, "I guess it's getting on all right."

" And paying?" queried the Captain.

"And paying," repeated McJones. He closed his mouth with a snap, as if figuratively tasting his profits.

"It was a venture," said the Captain meditatively, after a pause knocking the ashes out of his pipe.

"Venture!" reiterated McJones. Then in a still higher key, "Venture! Why, man, it was the biggest speculation I ever put my hand to, and I guess they've been many."

He chuckled quietly to himself as if at some secret recollection.

"It wasn't the money so much—I've run bigger things than that, but it was whether it would pay or not in this blessed London of yours. You are all so hoity-toity that you can't put your delicate fingers to anything that smells of trade, though the profits come in handy, if they are given you in a silk purse, and no mention is made of the counter and office stool."

The Captain winced a little. McJones's taste was not of the finest order; and he had a knack of calling a spade a spade in a fashion which savoured too much of the plough and too little of the drawing-room. But just now it suited him to ignore these little peculiarities, so he continued his catechism with perfect good humour.

"Well, you see, McJones, we might perhaps turn ourselves more to trade if we all possessed your business capacities. Everything looks pleasant to the man who succeeds."

His auditor scarcely veiled the smile of satisfaction which overspread his features. The virtue of humility had not been called forth by the circumstances of his life. The man was a gigantic success. Everything he touched seemed to bring him money.

He had been all over the world, and gathered wealth in every capital. No country claimed him as her own, though the captain had a shrewd suspicion that the prefix to his patronymic had not always existed; and that while he despised the metro-

polis and affected Yankeeisms, it was more than probable that London street cries had first assailed his infant ears.

"May I ask," he queried, after a pause, "if it is not impertinent, what made you fix upon London as the scene of your speculation?"

McJones smiled in a superior way.

"My dear fellow," he said a little scornfully, "it is clear to see you have not knocked about the world as much as I have. No"—with an authoritative wave of the hand, as the Captain would have interrupted; "I've not the slightest doubt that you have been in India and Egypt, and half over the globe with your regiment, but that is a different thing to knocking about as I've done, and seeing men in the rough. When I came back, what did I find? England and London especially, full of young fellows loafing about—most of them failed for your blessed army, and not knowing what to do with themselves. Brought up to nothing, is it wonderful they can find nothing to do? There are plenty of other men, trained to work, who can slip into all the vacancies, and quite right too."

"But," interrupted the Captain warmly, "they do find employment, and turn out rattling good fellows into the bargain."

"Yes," sneered McJones, "and go to the dogs as well. I've been behind the scenes myself, remember, and for every success, there are at least ten failures. Have you been among the emigrants?—in the backwoods?—and the bush?—and the gold fields? My word! but you find some specimens there! Beauties! Oh! they're a credit to their mother country, I can tell you."

The Captain winced a little, and a hot flush rose to his fore-head.

McJones laughed, and getting up, put a large hand good-naturedly on his shoulder.

"Guess that puts your monkey up, eh? But it's truth. Facts are facts, man, and ugly ones sometimes. We will leave those details, though, and go on. Well, the idea struck me, why should all these young chaps go out of the country when they might just as well stay in it and work? They'll turn their hands to anything out there, why should they be too proud to do he same at home?"

"Oh! but that is different," interposed the Captain quickly. McJones surveyed him coolly.

"So I was told a dozen times at first," he remarked, "but allow me to remind you that necessity is as ugly a reality as facts. When you are really hungry, dry bread tastes as sweet as cake. It was a touch and go to begin, but I did it, and it is —paying."

He rang out the last word with conscious pride, and the Captain's wrath evaporated in interest.

"And you mean to tell me that your store is being worked, at this present minute, entirely by gentlemen?"

McJones nodded.

"Look here," he said, tapping on the table with two fingers; "I'll just give you a brief sketch of the thing. I got my men—some one way and some another. There was work for the detectives occasionally, for I'm too old a bird to be caught with chaff, and was not going to take every young spark who thought he would try his hand at a new thing. I only took men who had fairly failed for the army, or any other profession; or a lad whose parents were sending him abroad because they did not know what to do with him. I just told 'em straight at the outset that I would stand no nonsense, and meant work, if they didn't. And I'll say that much for your gentleman, he does work when he sets his mind to it."

"Of course," muttered his hearer gruffly.

"Well, perhaps you see the 'of course' clearer than I do," responded McJones good-humouredly. "At all events, I don't see why he should mind standing behind a counter any more in England than across the Atlantic. A store is a store, I say; and my fine young gentlemen are beginning to find that out too. Why, man alive, I get more applications than I know what to do with; and as for the parents, they send me letters by the score—tons of 'em."

"And you have done all this without a hitch?" said the Captain curiously. "Are you a ruler of men's passions as well as an organizer? How do you keep them out of mischief?"

McJones tilted his heels a little higher, and lighted another cigar before answering.

"Well," he said, with a sly look at his companion, "I give 'em a little taste of military discipline. First, I put 'em into a kind of uniform—pleased their vanity, you see, and it looks better behind a counter. Then I lodged them altogether in one block

of buildings, and they christened it 'The Barrack' the first night. They are all under charge of a Colonel, an old army man—(had any amount of applications for that, by the way)—who knows his business. They can go and come as they like, after hours, I told him, but they must all be in to time as much as if they were in a regiment. Any irregularity is reported at once."

"And how about the other departments?" queried the Captain; "what do you do about your women-folk?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, Captain," returned the other candidly, "the gals gave me more bother than all the rest of the concern put together."

The Captain laughed.

"Never a rose without a thorn," he quoted.

"And they were thorny," responded McJones feelingly. "My! if I hadn't bet my bottom dollar that my store should be worked by ladies and gentlemen, and by no one else, I declare I would have cut the whole thing!"

"Were they so bad?" said his interlocutor sympathisingly.

"They weren't," retorted McJones energetically. their hearts, it wasn' them; it was their mothers. If you could have seen all those good ladies crowding up to me! I think I surprised one or two of them when they began about 'it not being done in their day,' and 'not work for ladies,' Probably not, I told them, but their daughters had applied to me for work, and I did not see anything more derogatory in measuring off ribbon, trimming hats, or trying on a gown, than the work hundreds of 'em are doing in the hospitals every day, or washing poodle dogs for some cross old woman. My word!" he continued, rising, and pacing up and down the room, "I'm a rough fellow enough myself; but it does rile one to see the coldblooded way those poor governesses and companions are treated in some houses. Pah! it's sickening! And their employers go off to missionary meetings and talk cant, when they are behaving like a set of dressed-up savages themselves at home. don't profess any creed, but the women-folk who work for me shall never have to complain of bad treatment."

The Captain stretched out a hand, and grasped his warmly.

'Bless you for that," he said heartily.

For the first time McJones looked a little abashed, at such an

unwonted demonstration of feeling. But in a moment he recovered his habitual sang froid.

"They came round after a bit," he continued, with a twinkle in his eye, "when they found it was to be all square and proper, and that their gals weren't to be up to all kinds of jinks, but lodged in rooms by themselves with a matron to look after them. They get along all right, I can tell you, and are a very fine lot too!"

It was impossible to help laughing.

"You are an extraordinary man, McJones," said the Captain, "but how do you manage to keep all this going? You cannot be always on the spot yourself."

McJones shook his head.

"No. I have a manager. He's the only man in the whole concern who isn't a gentleman; but I was not going to have any amateurs experimenting with my scheme. I knew my man, and that is saying enough. Come on, and see for yourself, what you think of him."

He linked his arm in his companion's, and the two came down the hotel steps together. A greater contrast could scarcely be imagined. The Captain, a spruce, upright figure, bronzed, and somewhat dried up by an Indian sun, but dressed to a nicety; the other, his tall hat pushed decidedly farther back than fashion permitted, his coat indicative rather of comfort than elegance, and his whole air that of a man who defied the world—and came out conqueror.

They walked on for some minutes in silence, away from the more fashionable quarters, and towards that part of London which to many minds is emphatically "over the border." Then McJones expanded a little.

"You see," he said, "my work does not only lie up here—I found out it would not do to depend upon uncertain supplies for my country produce, so I took that under my supervision too. A few days in the country enabled me to hire some of those farms lying about so handy—lots of 'em, going dirt cheap. They are worked on the same principle. A good, knowledgable bailiff over each, and all the labourers gentlemen. There is a lady in each house to look after the gals who do the dairy and poultry.

" I've only two rules, but stick to 'em through thick and thin.

They must be ladies, and they must work. No shirking of that, I told 'em. The farmers' daughters tried piano-playing and French novels, and it didn't pay. Now, I am going to try turning up your sleeves and putting your shoulder to the wheel. The farms kill two birds with one stone. I get my supply of milk, butter, poultry, and eggs regular, and under my own control; while if any of the hands at the store turn up ill, or want a holiday, I just pack 'em off there for a change."

The Captain paused for a moment in genuine admiration.

"McJones!" he cried. "You are a genius, man; how do you keep all this going?"

McJones grinned.

"Well," he said in his longest drawl, "I don't know about genius. It wanted capital, and a head, and I happened to have both. Now, come along in, there it is in front of you."

The Store did not differ in any outward respect from many of its kind in more fashionable localities. A large mass of building, rather ugly than otherwise, with a constant stream coming and going through its open doors; and a line of cabs and carriages waiting outside.

"You get plenty of customers," remarked the Captain.

McJones smiled again.

"Customers, yes! At first they were mostly of one class, but we have everyone now. Bless you, they all come where they can get things cheap. Last week we had three duchesses."

If the Captain expected to be astonished, his expectations were disappointed. There was nothing unusual or startling in this great concern worked by gentlemen. The only thing which struck the senses, and then only with a consciousness of something pleasant, was that every official was dressed alike. If the dark blue uniform, with buff facings, pleased the wearer's vanity, it was very pleasant to the eye, and a refreshing change from the black coat of ordinary use.

Once the Captain was nearly getting into trouble. Passing through the grocery department, where a fair, good-looking young fellow was enlarging on the merits of streaky bacon to a bride, whose pretty face was puckered into anxious lines over the responsibility of pleasing her lord, the Captain suddenly exclaimed: "Why, that's young Harrison! I must just ask him how his father is."

But McJones checked the outstretched hand, and drew him away.

"My dear fellow," he said drily, "we never recognise our friends here."

The Captain felt snubbed, but contented himself with making a few trifling purchases in the stationery department, and found it very agreeable to be waited upon by an individual whose taste in photograph frames did not totally disagree with his own.

He was allowed to peep into the millinery and show-rooms where the bright-faced girls, in their blue uniform, completed the harmony of the whole.

"I shall envy my wife," he said smiling, "when I bring her for her next new bonnet," and then followed his cicerone up many flights of stairs to the top storey.

Here they passed through a large room, full of clerks, into a smaller apartment, tenanted only by one girl, also writing busily. From thence, another door led into the sanctum of the manager. As they were passing in, a young fellow came out.

"Oh, Thorold, we are just going to see your father. Shall we find him very busy?"

" Not particularly, sir."

He held open the door for them into a small but comfortably furnished room, occupied only by an elderly man.

"Mr. Thorold," said McJones, "allow me to introduce Captain Dennison. He has been looking over the Store, and has been —may I add "(turning to his visitor)—"much interested in it."

"Much," responded the Captain heartily.

It was with some curiosity that he regarded the "only man who was not a gentleman" in the whole concern.

He saw a rugged, clever face, with keen eyes shaded by somewhat bushy, white eye-brows. There was business written in every feature; but it was a good face, and one that you felt would treat you fairly, though with strictest justice.

If the man were not a gentleman, the Captain decided that he possessed a large share of gentlemanly feeling, and more than an average amount of brains.

Coming out they again passed the same young man talking to the girl in blue.

The Captain glanced significantly at them.

"Have much of that sort of thing here?" he asked smiling.

McJones looked back at the couple and shrugged his shoulders carelessly.

"My dear fellow, that's not my concern; they must settle it amongst themselves. We don't generally mix the sexes here, but Miss Matheson is Thorold's own private secretary, and only works in his private office. He must look after his own son."

Fortunately for her own peace of mind, the girl in blue remained totally ignorant of the remarks being passed upon her.

"These are the letters and invoices, Mr. Thorold," she was saying. "Perhaps you would not mind taking them to your father?"

He gathered the papers together, and was leaving the office when a bright-faced boy came rather bashfully in, and laid a bunch of primroses on her desk.

"I could not get any violets to-day, Miss Matheson, there was such a run on them that they had all gone before I got out."

"Oh, thank you, Tom, these are lovely; you quite spoil me."

She smelt the sweet, fresh blossoms, and tucked them in her belt, the boy looking on with gratified pleasure.

Now, Tom Markham's admiration for Miss Matheson was an acknowledged fact. He worshipped her with all the infatuation of seventeen, and sang her praises to anyone who would listen. His notion of bliss at present was to be her humble slave. He would probably have thoroughly enjoyed lying down for her to walk over, but that being impossible in these prosaic days, contented himself with bringing her such little offerings as the present one, and trying to anticipate her slightest wish. But for her absolute refusal to accept anything besides the tiniest bunches of flowers, his pay would long ago have been recklessly squandered in every conceivable trifle.

The lad was a general favourite, and his cheery ways and high spirits had not as yet suffered from a London life. His proper sphere ought to have been that of a country squire or rollicking sailor, but being the very younger son of a very numerous family, his father had been glad to place him where he could learn something that would pay, with the additional advantage of being amongst men of his own class. Perhaps the old Admiral hardly admitted to himself how much this latter consideration weighed his decision when he parted with his Benjamin.

The lad now hesitated, looked across at Thorold, and then blurted out eagerly:

"Miss Matheson, may I take you home this evening? I know your brother is going to Richmond."

It was one of Miss Matheson's privileges, as the manager's private secretary, to live at her own home, and one of Markham's keenest pleasures to escort her whenever opportunity occurred, yet now Thorold, apparently absorbed in his papers near the further door, first reddened, and then bent his brows in a dark frown, when the girl's answer came brightly:

"Thank you very much, Tom, if you will be ready at six," his frown deepened, and with a rustle of his papers, closed the door with a bang.

The girl in blue glanced up with a look of surprise, but the closed door told her nothing, and she continued her writing.

An hour later she and Markham were pursuing their way towards Kensington.

It was a little house at which they stopped, of the grey villa type, of which there is every variety to be found in that popular locality.

But inside the resemblance ceased. Every bit of furniture and well-worn carpet seemed to repeat "We do not belong here," every picture on the wall seemed to assert its claim to larger rooms and loftier ceilings.

"It always seems just like home," wrote Tom to the country house in Devonshire, and the Admiral left his cards the next time he was in Town, and came away shaking his kindly head at Fortune's fickle moods.

Tom's advent was hailed with a shout of joy by a sturdy little fellow of eight, who forthwith dragged him off into what was called by courtesy the garden, to show him his last creation in boats.

"Mattie," called a feeble voice from the drawing-room, and Miss Matheson went in.

"Mattie," said the voice again, "is that Tom?"

"Yes, dear; did you want him?"

Miss Matheson knelt down by the sofa and kissed the little white face. Her crippled sister was very dear to her.

"I only hoped," answered the child wearily, "that it was Mr. Thorold."

A little frown came over Miss Matheson's forehead, but she only stooped and kissed the child again.

"Has it been a bad day, Edie?" she questioned tenderly.

"Very long," said the little sufferer, but further explanation was interrupted by the sudden banging of the front door, and a figure in the inevitable blue and buff looking into the room.

"Mother! Where is mother? Oh, here she is," as the lady in question appeared. "Mother dear, do you think you could let us have a little grub for the river? Edwards and I are going down there this evening. I've only got ten minutes."

Mrs. Matheson hurried off to get the required provisions, and the new-comer threw himself into a chair by the sofa, and took Edie in his arms.

- "Well, old lady, what were you and Mattie looking so solemn about when I came in? Did she have to walk home alone?"
  - " No, Tom came with her."
  - "Oh," said Hal carelessly, "I thought perhaps Thorold would."
  - "I would rather have Tom," interrupted Mattie hastily.
- "Of course," said Tom teasingly, "we all know her ladyship looks on Thorold as the dust at her feet."
- "I don't," began Mattie hotly, "but I don't see why we should associate with him more than is necessary."
- "Please, Hal, don't," began Edie appealingly, but Hal was in a teasing mood, and wanted something to occupy his time till his mother returned.
- "No, Edie, nothing will ever make Thorold a gentleman, don't forget that. He has been to a public school, and Cambridge, and is a ripping good fellow, and mother likes him, and thinks him very nice, but he is not good enough for the high and mighty Miss Mattie."
- "It's not fair, Hal," retorted Mattie, angry tears in her eyes. "Just because mother is kind to your friends and has them here is no reason she should like them."
- "Oh, but she does like Thorold, don't you, mother?" as Mrs. Matheson appeared.

She glanced from once face to the other, and took in the situation. It was a long-established dispute.

"I thought you were in a hurry, Hal. Here is some food. I hope you will find enough."

"You're a brick, mother." He bounded up, put Edie on the

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sofa again, and was racing off into the hall, when a ring at the bell brought him hastily back.

- "Visitors," he groaned. "Can't I hide?"
- "Too late," smiled Mrs. Matheson, but the next moment there was a glad chorus of:
  - "Gwen!"
  - "Oh, Gwen dear."
  - "Hullo, old girl, it's a blessing it is only you."

Hal waited only to kiss the new arrival, and was off; while Gwen came in, the neatest possible little hospital nurse.

Five years ago she was riding to hounds, and playing tennis down in sunny Suffolk; now she was putting the same amount of energy into a hospital ward, and turning out a model nurse.

- "I have four hours off," she said; "so I can stay to dinner, mother. Who has Jack got hold of in the garden?"
- "Tom Markham," replied Mrs. Matheson. "Are you very tired, my child?"
  - " Not very, mother."

Two minutes later, the hospital nurse, divested of bonnet and cloak, was having a race with Markham on stilts. It was necessarily short, by reason of the limited area; but there seemed no limit to the peals of laughter and amusement.

Mrs. Matheson watched them from the garden-door. "What children they are!" she said smiling, and then sighed.

Mattie linked her arm in her mother's.

"You see we have not had all the fun knocked out of us yet, mother, in spite of the uniform."

Mrs. Matheson smiled again, and sighed again. She had been one of the mothers described by McJones as "thorny." Not aggressively so; but quietly fearful of the unknown world into which her carefully-trained daughters were suddenly launched by circumstances.

Now, three of them wore uniform; two at the store, one at the hospital, and she was trying to like it and feel it best.

Next morning, when Mattie went into the office, a bunch of violets—fragrant, and sparkling with dew, lay on her desk. She took them up with an involuntary cry of delight.

Thorold, writing busily at another table, bent lower over his work. There was nothing unusual in his presence. He was in and out of the office all day, from his father's private room.

But his relations with his father's secretary were of the scantiest. He wrote, and looked over papers, for the work was enormous; but they rarely exchanged half-a-dozen words all day, except on business.

Mattie put down the violets, and began copying out a pile of letters put ready for her. She wrote on for an hour; the figure at the other table never moving. Then she put down her pen, and began reading over her work. She did not seem to be in such a keen business mood as usual. Perhaps there was some magnetism in the grey eyes watching from behind, which prevented studious application.

"My father wished these invoices looked over, and taken back to him, Miss Matheson."

Thorold laid a sheaf of papers on the desk, and lingered a moment.

- "You have no fault to find with the violets?"
- "They are beautiful, Mr. Thorold."
- "And yet you do not think them worthy to wear?"
- · His voice was constrained, even harsh.
- Mattie gave one quick glance into the grave face, then with heightened colour and slow fingers, fastened the flowers in her belt.

The young man gravely considered them—and her—for a moment, then abruptly left the room.

Mattie sat writing, writing. The pen scratched over the paper with a hasty, angry sound. It ran, it raced, it flew. The fingers seemed scarcely able to guide its rapid movements. There was no cessation of the pace for the best part of another hour; then from sheer physical exhaustion it must needs pause. But how much had been worked off! How many feelings had gone into that inanimate paper! It was bristling with thoughts, alive with sensation, rampant with agitation!

This man, this quiet-voiced, stern-faced man. She had vowed to herself never to accept anything from him, much less wear his flowers, and now—the very first time he asked her! Well, they had been in her belt for an hour, she could not take them out now; they might as well stay there.

Again.

Why did she not like him? Because he had not been born a gentleman? Was that sufficient reason? Was he not one in every other sense of the term? Gwen had said so, and Gwen

rarely erred. Mattie had a very great respect for any opinion expressed by this plain-spoken, straightforward young sister of hers; and Gwen had asserted:

"You know, old Mat, he is a thorough good fellow, and worth all the rest put together."

Everyone at home liked him, Hal had brought him back several times, for tea, or dinner, or in the evening. Mattie, never—except on one occasion when he had insisted on bringing her home in a thunderstorm.

Her mother always welcomed him, but then she was so good and welcomed all their friends. And Edie? Perhaps it was not so well to think of Edie. It brought back the recollection of a somewhat stern face grown wonderfully gentle and tender, while two strong arms carried the little cripple about the tiny garden.

Scratch, scratch, scratch; till the one o'clock bell rang out, and Mattie was glad to throw down her pen and run off to luncheon and fresh faces.

Half way down she encountered a stream of girls bound on the same errand. One of them, bright-faced and fair-haired, linked her arm in hers.

"Oh, Miss Matheson, what lovely violets you have got! They make me think of home."

She was a clergyman's daughter from Dorsetshire, too young and bright to have been yet hurt by hard work.

"I've had such fun this morning," she went on. "Fancy, Mrs. Trevelyan came! She never found out who I was till she was trying on a new bonnet, and then you should have seen her face! Of course she wanted to have a long talk with me, but I explained to her that we are not allowed to know our friends during work hours, though it was hard not to listen about all of them at home, when I was just dying to hear! But she is in London for two months, and I am to go and see her one evening. Won't it be jolly?"

Mattie heartily acquiesced in the other's pleasure. It often happened thus—that the girls came across old friends, and had many peeps back into the life they had lost, or which was new to them. The store occupied their time by day, but after work hours they could return to the world waiting for them behind its closed doors.

For herself, such *rencontres* rarely happened. No one came to the office, except on special business with the manager; and even such business was generally conducted through the medium of Thorold junior.

She did not mind; it suited her pride not to be obliged to meet people whom she could not acknowledge, and it suited her business instincts not to be interrupted.

Only, sometimes, she wondered in a vague fashion, whether all the rest of life were to be spent thus; whether grey hairs and a cap would find her still writing. Not that the work itself was unpleasant to her. It was infinitely preferable to that which she had discarded for it—namely, acting the part of an upper servant to an elderly lady, veiled under the name of "companion."

When the spring days lengthened into summer, and not only violets, but roses and lilies were plentiful, the young ladies (and for that matter the young gentlemen too) at the store, were apt to find the days somewhat tiring. Work increased correspondingly with the temperature, and they cast longing thoughts towards each evening with its attendant liberty.

Mattie, at her desk, thought the office had never seemed so small and hot. Her thoughts went back with an almost sick longing to the green lanes and cool garden of her old home. Imperceptibly she flagged.

Somebody's eyes saw it.

"You are tired," said Thorold's voice at her elbow, as she laid down her pen one evening.

It was nearly closing time. A few minutes more and then rest—till the following morning.

" Not very."

Instinctively she pulled herself together, and began to put the books in order.

"It is tiring work bending over a desk all day," went on Thorold's voice, with a strange thrill in it. "And you are not used to it."

Mattie straightened her back.

"Ladies can work, Mr. Thorold," she said in her haughtiest manner.

He came nearer.

"If I had my way," he said in the low, thrilling tenes, "you

should never do another hour's, another minute's work. This poor little tired hand "—his own closed over it as it lay on the desk—"should never write another word."

She sat motionless, paralysed. This man's audacity deprived her of power; and in the moment's pause he bent over her and took not only her hand but herself into his possession. The same strong arms which carried Edie into the sunshine were round her; the mouth that unbent in tender lines for the little cripple, were pressing passionate kisses on cheek and brow and lips as if it could never cease.

It was the work of a moment; a brief wave of passion which broke and passed in a lightning flash; and then she had slipped from his arms, and fled—leaving him staring at the door like a man in a dream, with eyes which passed from vacancy to consciousness as their owner muttered between his set teeth:

" My God, what a brute I have been!"

He turned to the desk, and mechanically set it in order; wiped the pen, put the papers tidy, turned the key.

It had never been left in disorder before. Then he sat down and putting his arms upon it, rested his head there.

Her desk. Her place. Two softer arms had been resting there all the afternoon. The stern lips once, under cover, touched the hard wood.

No one would disturb him. The workers had gone; his father would not leave his private room for fully half an hour. He could think in peace.

Peace! nay, there was none for him now. What had he done? How was it that in one brief moment, his mad passion had overstepped the bounds of that strong will which he had believed invincible? Surely, he argued, he might have kept under control what had been already so jealously guarded? He ground his teeth, and cursed his own folly. She disliked him; he knew it, felt it, and yet the delicious dream had grown. Day by day, that strange, one-sided love-making in the dingy office, near her, breathing the same air, touching the same objects—all the foolish delight of Love's mystery.

And now? He writhed on his chair and clenched his hands together.

The office meant to her in plain, unvarnished English—money. It meant boots and gloves for herself, little luxuries for Edie;

sundry cunningly-conveyed aids to the household purse. If her salary ceased—and it was a good one—all this must cease for an indefinite period. Employment is not easy at any time for a woman to find in London, and specially such work as the present, properly paid and guarded. If he, by one rash act, had rendered her present position untenable, what would she do?

Half an hour did not suffice to answer that question. He pondered it all night, and did not find a solution by dawn. Every now and then his heart would bound up with fierce exultation that for one brief moment she had been his—he had held her—had kissed her. Then he chid himself for the bitter happiness, and set his brain working afresh.

Plan after plan arose in his mind, and was dismissed as infeasible. To do as any other man might have done, and urge his suit, would be but to drive her more swiftly away. He must be the one to go, but where?—and how? His father depended upon him; he was already conversant with every intricate secret of the business; his presence could not easily be spared.

How best to get away without doing further harm, and lowering his self-respect any more than he had already done, was the question which kept him tossing on his bed till long after the sun had risen; and left but few hours for restless sleep.

Another soul in London fared but little better that night. In the little villa at Kensington, a storm was raging in one young breast. The moon might witness it, and the rising sun, and the bold sparrows when they lighted on the window sill and chirped a good-morning greeting. But no one else was allowed even to guess the truth.

Perhaps Thorold had never guaged her character better than when he yielded to his own instinctive consciousness that she would be in the office next morning. Nine o'clock struck, to be sure, but the hand scarcely pointed to five minutes past, when she came quietly in and took her place.

She had inherited a large share of the spirit of discipline from her soldier father; a spirit which forbade her to put private feelings before duty, or to turn her back on a difficulty. Perhaps a little bit of the fighting element had descended too. She would not let anyone see she was afraid; she could hold her own, confident in her will.

But neither spirit nor will were so strong but that they almost failed her at the last moment. Even with her hand on the office door, she faltered. Would he be generous? Would he, in his power, take pity on her helplessness? Was she strong enough to carry it through? Why not fly before it was too late—fly, as she had done yesterday, and leave the work, her chief, and all?

Was it her father's daughter who would fly from danger? She resolutely turned the lock and went in.

Her first glance, if we except the unconscious one which took in Thorold's face, as white as her own, showed her another occupant at the table. He was a lad about fifteen, generally known as the "office boy," in training for higher work, but now serving as messenger between the manager and the clerks.

"The work will probably be heavy, Miss Matheson," remarked Thorold carelessly, "so John will work in here to-day if you have no objection."

She bowed a silent acknowledgment and passed to her desk. In her heart she thanked him. He had solved one problem at least.

There was a good deal of work done during the first hour in the office that morning. John thought the chief's secretary worked a good deal harder than any of the clerks. If her hand trembled, he did not know it. If the writing was merely mechanical, it was correct and no one was any the wiser. When towards eleven o'clock, Thorold went in to his father she breathed freer, and the busy, scratching pen was allowed a moment's rest.

He did not appear in the office again till the afternoon, and then came in with every indication of hurry.

"My father will be glad to see you about those letters from Paris, at once, Miss Matheson. If you are going to him now, I may as well bid you good-bye. We—that is to say—it has been arranged that I should go to New York instead of Fraser, to see after that business for Mr. McJones. I start to-night, and expect to be absent about a month. It will suit me admirably—a new country, a presumably pleasant voyage, and a month's change to enlarge my ideas."

He rattled on, without paying much attention, but was holding out his hand the while to bid her farewell, and she must perforce put her own into it if only for appearance sake. They said good-bye within a yard of the unconscious John, who sat by, only wishing he could go too, and trying to recall enough geography to realise how near New York was to the Rocky Mountains and grizzly bears. These abstruse calculations prevented him from seeing that the two hands remained clasped that brief second longer than etiquette requires, and parted tingling with the electricity which it seemed impossible for the proud faces above them to have imparted.

Mattie spent the rest of the afternoon with the manager, combating the refractory spirit of a French manufacturer, whose ideas did not coincide with those of his English customer.

Edie's plaintive face greeted her when she returned home.

"Mr. Thorold has been to say good-bye. He is going to America for a whole month, but he has promised to write to me."

She kissed the child, made some suitable reply, and escaped as soon as possible.

Safe in her own room, she first indulged in the feminine luxury of a good cry, and then faced the question.

He had said he would be away for a month. She had four weeks to fight it out.

There was nothing strange in this visit to America. Frequent journeys to and fro between various places were of constant occurrence, and this one had been a long-spoken-of project. Only it had not been Thorold who was to undertake it. Circumstances had merely caused a sudden change of persons, and she accepted the situation. Through the midst of the storm in which she had whirled since last night, she had rested firmly on the rock that nothing but "fair play" would be received from her antagonist.

Like herself, she knew that the call of duty would find him at his post the following morning. No private considerations would influence either of these two proud spirits. But it was at this point that the strong could and did become merciful.

Being obliged to cause her unwilling pain, he lightened it by the presence of the unsuspecting John. Having done wrong, he tried to right it by removing his objectionable presence as swiftly as possible.

He had done his part, it remained for her to determine the next move.

That move must take place in four weeks' time:

Must she go? Would she be obliged to give up the work—better, and far more congenial than anything else heretofore, and—her salary?

That was the real rub. It meant so much—that one generous resolve of McJones never to underpay his women-workers.

Only yesterday morning Mrs. Matheson said with a smile how this beautiful summer would help to shorten the winter fires before the impending coal strike, and Mattie knew that under the brave smile was the anxiety about the additional call on the slender purse. Suppose her salary went also?

Would it be possible at the end of that month, to take up the old threads and let things go on as if nothing had happened? Would four weeks obliterate it from their minds and bury the recollection in some Lethe's pool? Or was it probable that he, on his travels, might devise some plan for keeping away altogether, and leave her in peaceful possession of the field?

She was confident of her own power to keep the secret for ever; and he would never again dare—

Stay! how did that word dare come in?

Why should not he dare what other men had before him? And in what would the daring lie? In her own imagination!

She was well born?—Yes. A lady?—Yes. Poor?—Yes. His father's secretary?—Yes.

On the other hand.

The store was increasing daily. The manager's son would succeed him. He was, or would be, rich; and the world loves money. It will graciously overlook every side of a dark cloud except its silver lining.

It may not be always convenient to notice the patient delver in the background, digging and piling up the yellow gold. His hands are rough; his manners likewise.

But when the scion of the labouring house steps forth, with the moneybags in his pocket, smiling mothers throw open their drawing-rooms, and Clubland extends the hand of fellowship through the medium of its dandies.

Had she met Thorold anywhere else, Miss Matheson would probably have been the first to see his good qualities. As it was—the mark of the office seemed imprinted upon him.

As it was---

Two noble natures could scarcely meet without appreciating each other's good points. She did him the justice of imputing to his flight its true motive.

Where another man would have sought to remedy yesterday's error by an offer of marriage, he tried to shield her by refraining.

Her work, her home, Edie's little comforts, were secured to her for another month. At the end of that time something would probably have evolved itself out of this chaos. Her brain could think no further. She must trust the future—and work.

And she did!

There was no lack. It seemed as if all London were crowding into its last days of sojourn in town all the business and bustle it possibly could, before melting away to country, watering-place, or Scotland.

"Capital season," laughed McJones, snapping his fingers, "best we have had for years."

And the night never seemed sufficient to cool the store from the stream of human life passing unceasingly through its doors. It waxed hotter and hotter, and to some of its inmates, a weritable prison.

His son's absence necessarily threw more work upon the manager, and work for him meant work for his secretary also.

And she laboured on untiringly. Glad of the work; glad of any occupation to distract her thoughts. The pen was not often laid down in those days. Every morning she woke determined to solve the problem—every evening found it postponed once more. It seemed to grow harder each day.

Then, half-way through, Fate helped her.

An old aunt, from whom they had never expected a half-penny, suddenly died, leaving the Mathesons a small legacy. Not much—nothing at all in the eyes of the world stepping daintily by; only some paltry £150 a year—but it meant a great deal to them.

It just meant that the continuance of Mattie's salary was not absolutely necessary to the family comfort—that she was more free to pick and choose her work—in fact, that she could say good-bye to the office with an easy conscience.

And then it suddenly became very dear to her.

She looked round with affection at its ugly walls and dry ledgers. How hard it would be to begin once again somewhere else! Only a fortnight more. What excuse could she give the manager?

Every night of the fortnight she pondered the question in her room—gazing out into the soft summer darkness—crying to it to help her.

Must she go? Suppose he had forgotten—or devised some plan?

But the night laughed her to scorn.

What plan?

And how forget?

Did not her own cheeks burn afresh at the thought of that evening, till she put up her hands to hide them even from the darkness! Did not the memory of his kisses set her tingling with shame?

Ah! if it had been some one now that she could have loved, what a difference! Strong arms to guard her, love to shelter her; a home of her own; little children.

Sweet thoughts that made her eyes glisten, and her lips soft with a whispered prayer.

But this man! This man whom she disliked so much, that she had to repeat it again to assure herself of the fact. This man!

She would be gone when he came back. Not before. It would be cowardly to desert the manager in this stress of business.

Communings, such as these by night, and the work and heat by day, had the effect of taking Miss Matheson's colour away.

So much so that the manager noticed it. He always appreciated good work when he saw it.

There only wanted a few days to the month's end. Already Mattie was wording her notice, writing it down in odd moments on fragments of paper to see how it looked, and tearing them up again as unsatisfactory.

She took a bundle of correspondence to Mr. Thorold one morning.

"You are not looking well, Miss Matheson," he said kindly. "I think you want a little change."

There was no lack of colour then.

"Oh no," she answered hastily, "it is only the heat—I am not at all tired, and I like work."

Pride reared her head a little higher.

"I know," he said, "you have given us proof of that. It has been somewhat of a grind lately, and you have done good work for the firm, Miss Matheson"—her face flushed again, but with pleasure—" and we should like, that is, we hope you will avail yourself of a holiday in the country. A room at Gray's Farm will be at your service."

"The work is not finished," began Mattie hastily.

"There is not the slightest need for you to worry yourself upon that score. My son writes"—referring to some letters before him—"that, though unavoidably delayed several days, he hopes to be home early next week, so we shall not be shorthanded; and the press will be over. Please, therefore, consider yourself at liberty to make your own arrangements with Mrs. Gray, unless indeed"—noticing her reluctance—"you would rather not——?"

Civility demanded a reply.

"Thank you," she murmured, "but I am sure—if I might wait, in fact" (seeing the keen eyes regarding her halting sentences with surprise) "I do not like leaving the work."

"Ah, well! you must think it over."

And he lapsed into his papers again, glad to have done his duty; and more than glad to find someone in these days who really cared about work.

And Pride had a fine time of it that night in the darkness.

Run away, just as he was coming back? Own herself defeated—afraid to meet him? How could she ever have dreamed of such a thing? Of course she would stay, tired or no.

He was the one to blame. Let him go away, and begin new work elsewhere.

Pride walked into the office with a very determined face the following morning, and the next; but had not quite so much resolution on the third, and on the fourth, knocked at the manager's door with fingers that refused to be perfectly steady.

"If you will allow me, sir, I will accept your offer, and take a week's holiday next Monday."

"Certainly, Miss Matheson. I am very glad. If you could make it Monday evening, it would suit me best. My son

lands the following day, and will be with me as soon as possible."

So Pride went down to Gray's Farm, and breathed her native air; and fetched the mid-day post from the next village, on Wednesday, for Mrs. Gray, because that ensured its arrival a good hour earlier. Of course the daily paper came with the second post; and Pride must needs consult the shipping intelligence to see if any vessel connected with the firm had arrived in port.

It must be the correct thing to do when one is connected with a large business, or Pride would not have done it.

And while she read the desired information, Thorold sat in his father's room and rendered an account of himself. The recital was necessarily long, but it came to an end at last. Then the younger man got up and walked to the window.

"Anything happened while I've been away?" he asked with an assumption of carelessness. "I noticed Parkins in the office as I passed through."

"Parkins? Oh, yes. He is taking Miss Matheson's work while she is away."

" Is she ill?"

The tone perhaps betrayed more feeling than was intended.

Thorold senior looked up keenly from under his bushy eye-brows.

"You seem interested in my secretary," he remarked drily.

"I am."

His son faced round and spoke steadily.

"So interested that I intend to ask her to become my wife."

"Indeed? May I ask how long you have had this intention?"

The young man bit his lip at the tone of veiled sarcasm, then briefly told his father what had happened on the eve of his departure, and his reasons for going.

The elder leaned back in his chair, and regarded him narrowly during the narration.

"And may I further be allowed to enquire what has transspired during your absence to cause you to change your mind?" Again the young man winced.

"It has come to my knowledge" (he did not think it necessary to mention the medium of Edie's childish letters) "that the family have lately had a little money left them. This materially alters Miss Matheson's position in not making her salary an essential to their comfort; and leaves me free to offer myself to her."

- "You have probably no doubt in your own mind as to the answer you will receive."
  - "None whatever."
- "" Of course not, you young idiots never have."

Thorold's face had grown several shades paler as he faced his father.

"I think you and I are at cross purposes, sir. When I offer Miss Matheson my heart, there is not the slightest doubt in my own mind but that she will treat it with contempt; cast it from her, as beneath her notice; spurn it as the dust at her feet."

His breath came fast and labouring through his set teeth, as he pictured his own humiliation.

The manager started forward, and brought his hand on the table with a bang.

"My secretary!" he cried. "My secretary dare to refuse my son!"

Thorold had recovered himself by an effort; and now went on, speaking in a rapid but quiet voice.

"That will not make the slightest difference to her, though it may mean a great deal to us. The fact of my having more money than herself will weigh nothing in the balance of her feelings—against it there lies the fact of my birth, which in her eyes counterbalances an honest name, a true heart; in fact—all that a man can offer a woman. She thinks only of her own family, her own people, her old life. This present one is a bad dream to be forgotten when fortune shall again turn her wheel."

... He paused, breathless, and the manager's face darkened afresh.

"She is beneath you," he said angrily. "What is her position in the world? What will yours be? You will follow my steps, and rise higher. McJones is not a man to stop at trifles. In a few years you will be manager, partner, member. Parliament will see you yet. And this girl; this little, insignificant girl who works in my office—"

His son laid a restraining hand on his arm.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Remember, father, that is not her real position."



Thorold senior paused. A certain recollection flashed to his mind. Not many weeks ago, by one of those many opportunities of meeting, which London affords, he and his secretary had met at an evening party. It was borne in very strongly then upon the manager that Miss Matheson, in white silk—a relic of former days—taking her own place among the many guests, was a very different person to the girl in blue who sat in the office and conducted his correspondence.

That memory kept him silent now.

Thorold left his side and began walking up and down the room.

- "I cannot rest till it is done," he said. "I behaved like a curthe other day, and now——
- "Now," finished his father bitterly, "you will humiliate yourself at her feet."

Thorold's eyes flashed.

"Humiliate myself? Yes, perhaps. But she shall feel that my sense of honour is as deep as her own, that there is such a thing as 'nature's gentleman,' who can be neither made nor marred."

He threw his head back proudly, and his father regarded him with affectionate admiration.

Under his stern exterior there lurked the softest possible heart for this son. Away behind the counting house and ledgers and business, there lay a strong love which nothing could destroy.

"Boy," he said in a voice which trembled in spite of himself, "I cannot bear that she should treat you badly."

The young man stretched out his strong brown hand, and clasped his father's tightly.

"Wish me well, father, for I love her. Oh," he continued, resuming his walk up and down the room, "if I could save her from another hour of labour! How I would work for her, that her dear fingers might never again be tired!"

The keen eyes under their shaggy eyebrows watched his every step, as he squared his shoulders and threw back his head defiantly, ready to fight the world for her if she would let him. They glowed and twinkled and grew dim with sympathy. He was a good lad.

It was not until long after business hours that the two locked the private room, and walked home together.

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Down at the sunny farm in Suffolk next morning, Pride was having a good time of it. There were little chickens to feed and the dairy to visit, and then a long morning in the orchard, where the apples were already turning red and golden and russet-brown. Such a delicious morning—nothing around but sweet country sounds and scents—late roses, quacking ducks, sweet peas, and the swish of the scythe cutting the second crop of hay.

Just a morning to sit and dream, and think the thoughts which seemed so incongruous in the office—very incongruous also for Pride, who should surely never let its fancy rove into an impossible future—a future so bright and fairylike that it made Pride's eyes shine, and the prettiest possible colour come into her cheeks, quite unconscious that all this time Love was coming towards her through the orchard, hidden under the prosaic disguise of a tweed suit and straw hat.

So engrossing were the fancies that Love came quite near, and stood looking down on her with a sense that pink and white were prettier garments than the blue uniform which had formerly seemed so perfect on the wearer, and yet not able to put his feelings into words, nor, in fact to begin words of any kind, so great was the tumult in his breast.

And then, suddenly, she saw him, and sprang up with a little ery—a cry in which surprise and joy, longing and pain, were so strangely blended, that Love took her in his arms, and all his fine speeches and elaborate explanations went out of his head, while he only just repeated over and over in her ear:

"Five weeks, my darling, five weeks to-day since I saw you." And Pride, her head down on his shoulder and his kisses on her lips, was sobbing out, "Such long, long weeks."

"And so," remarked Tom mockingly, when the wonderful secret was imparted to him, "her high and mightiness has managed to be happy without a gentleman after all!"

"No," said Mattie bravely, "she found the real one while looking for the shadow."

M. F. W.

## "Guilty or Pot Guilty."

By H. GARTON SARGENT.

"You must be there by the evening," said the matron of the Nursing Institute, which has its headquarters in Quebec Square; and I, to whom the remark was made, was at that time one of the nurses, or "sisters," as we were called, and under orders to go down to a small town in Norfolk, to nurse a lady patient. Of her malady I knew nothing, except that it was not an infectious case, and of herself I knew still less. This was, however, as nothing to me. I was accustomed to going down to strange houses to nurse unknown people, and so it was with a light heart I took the train to Sapford, near which the house stood, and arrived there after a short journey of two hours, in time to make my patient comfortable and arrange her for the night. On arriving, I had found the establishment to consist of the sick woman I was to nurse, who was suffering from advanced dropsy and a weak heart, her son, and three servants, one of whom had been helping to nurse her mistress. The next day I soon got everything into order, had my first interview with the doctor, who seemed to think very badly of his patient's chances of recovery, and then settled down to my work, with all the interest I have always thrown into it. I soon found myself falling into my usual way of observing the moral and mental sides, as well as the physical of my patient, and indeed of everyone in the house. Thrown face to face with perfect strangers in the most intimate relationship with them, at a time when sorrow and anxiety removes the mask from most people, one cannot help, that is to say if one has any interest in one's fellow-creatures or any power of observation, noting down mentally their characteristics and wondering what lives theirs have been, and only too often, nature asserts itself in the unguarded moment of trouble and one sees then what others in a life-time may never discover. My patient was a quiet, middleaged woman, who seemed resigned to everything around her, and to her own critical condition. She seldom spoke except to ask for something, and the only thing which seemed to interest

her were sounds about the house, when she would turn her head and look at her door, and then in another way about the room; and one day, when this happened, and her eyes, in their course round the room, fell on me, I said:

"Do you want anything?"

"No," she said wearily, and then added, as if an afterthought, "Do look, is that anyone on the stairs?"

To soothe her, I got up and opened the door, but only to see her son near, going towards the staircase.

"It is only Mr. Colcroft," I said, "would you like to see him?"

But my only answer was a shake of the head and a very deep sigh.

This son of hers was a young man of about twenty-five. He did not seem to have any occupation and was seldom out of the house. His room was across the landing and one could hardly ever come out of the sick-room without encountering him, as with expressionless face and pale eyes, he mounted or descended the stairs, without apparently any object and hardly any consciousness of what he was doing. At first I thought it was the trouble of his mother's illness and anxiety for her which made him haunt the stairs and her landing like that, but when I found he never visited her, nor ever asked after her, I began to feel so annoyed with him, that one morning, meeting him, I said:

"Good morning, Mr. Colcroft, you will be glad to hear your mother has had a better night than usual."

"Oh!" he said, and as I waited for some further reply, he hurriedly added, with a sudden gleam in his colourless eyes, almost in a whisper, "Yes, so glad she's better, but don't let her talk much. It can't be good for her, you know."

"She does not talk much, I wish she did. It would do her no harm if one could get her to do it. She wants cheering," I said, thinking of the silent voice and deadened expression of my patient.

"Well," he said with a sickly smile, waving aside my difference of opinion, "she does not talk, does she?"

· And then, without waiting for my reply, he moved slowly off into his room and closed the door.

Though little seemed to have been said, this interview left an

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unpleasant impression on me. One thing I was certain of, he did not like his mother talking to me, but for what reason I could not divine. His indifference to his mother's state of health, though he knew she had not long to live, was no surprise to me; for sad as it may appear, I have on many occasions met with it as a nurse, and though we as a body, are often accused of becoming hard and unmoved to people's feelings, still, my heart has frequently ached for sick men and women who were leaving this world without a kind word said to them in farewell, or a kind feeling felt for them, from those one would look to for affection. And so I thought little of the want of good feeling or interest he diplayed, but on the other hand, with my mind dwelling on his objection to his mother talking I began to wonder whether there was any connection with them and his constant presence on the landing. An uncomfortable feeling that I was being watched, that there was some mystery involved in it all, began to trouble me, and this impression became all the more emphasized by the fact that the old lady herself was evidently ill at ease and markedly so when she heard footsteps, and was suggesting continually by some restless remark that she would welcome any excuse for having the door opened, and more than once she point blank asked me to do so, as she did when I first came. The only time she roused herself, was when I happened to say her son had gone out, a remark I made to her I must confess, in the first instance in order to see the effect on her, and the way she cheered up and began to talk and ask me questions, shewed me conclusively that my suspicions that she was afraid to speak generally from some cause, were correct, and that the reason was to be discovered in that unpleasant young son with his quiet ways and yellow eyes.

About this time, having now been some five days in charge of the case, my patient began to get worse and would lie for hours in a state of coma, coming back to consciousness only to stare at the ceiling and to answer monosyllabically when spoken to. And it was in one of these deep sleeps that my suspicions of Mr. Colcroft took a more tangible form. One afternoon about five o'clock he knocked at the door and asked if he could come in. He entered very quietly, and stood by the bed-side looking at his unconscious mother, drawing in his breath between his closed teeth as a man in great physical pain. The

sound and his way of looking at her made me shudder, I do not know why, but I felt certain that this, his first visit to his mother, was not made without some purpose, and I steeled myself for what was to follow.

After a few minutes' silence he turned slowly and fixed his pale eyes in my direction, not on me, but into space, as I had so often seen him do before.

"She is dying, isn't she?" he remarked in a monotonous manner.

"Yes," I said, telling him what the doctor's opinion had been.

"Oh, perhaps only two days," he repeated after me. "Still two days," he went on, as if he was hardly aware of my presence. "She does not eat anything now, does she?"

"Yes, certainly. It is most important to keep her up."

" Need she?"

The two last words came forth in the same monotony of tone, slowly said. I could hardly believe my ears at first. He was actually asking me to shorten his mother's life, to keep food from her, in order that she should not live the two days even the doctor said she might have. I stared at him, stupefied at first at the abysmal depths of wickedness the man had shewn me. There could be no mistake on my part. He had clearly said "Need she" have food. However, feeling that I, a mere girl of twenty-three, was standing in a terribly responsible position, and that I might be involved in the closing scenes of a life's drama, under circumstances requiring all my fortitude and nerve, I quickly controlled myself, and turning away from him, said coldly:

"I have already said that the doctor ordered food continually."

"Yes, continually," he said, automatically, and without another word, he walked out of the room.

When he had left, I sat down and tried to think of what I had better do. Putting aside the fact that my work had been unusually hard, as I had had to sit up every night with my patient, and my place was only taken for eight hours in the daytime by the housemaid, I felt that it was hardly right I should be left alone with a dying woman and quite ignorant of what fiendish move her son might take any moment to hasten her death. I

came to the conclusion that I would tell the doctor when he came that evening, that I could not go on alone any longer, as the work was too hard for one, and request him to telegraph up for another nurse to help me. If anything happened, I should not be alone then. I felt disinclined to tell the doctor what had happened. He might only think my nerves had given way, and I felt so certain of what the man's intentions had been, that I shunned the idea of not being believed, perhaps even laughed at.

As I was thinking over the whole matter, my patient moved and said something, and going over to her, I saw she was coming back to a knowledge of what was about her, as she very often did in the end of the day.

She lay there very still, with her white face looking up to the ceiling. One of her hands, with its solitary wedding-ring on it, lay outside the coverlet.

Sitting down by her side, I began speaking to her, to see if she was able to take food, and arranged her bed for her a little. Once, as my hand passed over hers, I felt her fingers weakly detaining me. Thinking she wanted something, I said interrogatively:

- " Yes?"
- "Is he there?" This in a whisper.
- "Your son?"

A slight increase of pressure on my hand.

- "Where?" I said, slightly puzzled.
- "At the door."
- "Oh, I will see," I said, cheerfully, to humour her, thinking she might be wandering a little.

Before I got to the door I felt convinced, however, that it was only her usual restless suspicion of her son, and, half fearing, half hoping to find him there, I turned the handle.

As the door opened I heard hurried footsteps, and the first thing I saw was young Mr. Coloroft some few feet off, almost at the top step of the stairs leading down. Before I could say anything, he turned half round, and said, in a meaningless manner: "I'm glad she is better," and then, a second after, he seemed to slip, and to my horror, fell headlong down the stairs.

The whole thing had been so sudden, that by the time I had looked over the bannisters and seen a servant, who opportunely

was in the hall, help him up and seat him on a chair, and had returned to my patient to see if she was not frightened—only a few moments had elapsed. I found her in what was, for her, quite an excited state, and I rapidly explained that her son had had a fall but was all right, and did my best to soothe her.

Just then, however, I was called out and met the doctor on the landing, who said he had been to see Mr. Colcroft, as they told him on his way upstairs that he had had an accident, and he was sorry to say he had hurt himself very badly, as he had twisted his knee joint and broken his left arm, and that he would have to lie up for some time.

I am afraid my intense dislike to Mr. Colcroft and my delight at the prospect of being relieved of his perpetual presence on the landing, made me rather indifferent to his misfortunes, and so, after a few commonplace expressions of regret, I utilised the occasion to press the necessity of having another nurse wired for, which the doctor said he would see done. We told my patient as little as possible of what had happened, only saying he had sprained his ankle, and for convenience was in the ground floor bedroom, but the old lady's mind seemed to dwell only on his being unable to leave his room, and then she became drowsy and fell into one of her now frequent comatose conditions and I prepared everything for the night, put a candle in a shady place, and sitting where I could best see, I began the tatting which I always resort to when I am nursing and can't read or do anything.

The night was well on and I had been putting coals on the small fire that had to be kept up, when I heard my patient moving in bed. With the shovel in my hand, I turned half round to listen, to see if she was awake or only restless, when I heard her whispering. I put the shovel quietly down and went over to her, and stood near the bed. She was lying quite still now, so still that she might have been dead, with her face ashy white, contrasting with her dark hair, with wide-open eyes looking up. Her lips were moving, as if speaking, and every now and then a whispered word came from them. I bent down and spoke to her, without receiving any answer, and yet she seemed to be saying something coherent, as every now and then I began to catch a few words.

"It must come. The world is not large enough to hold it! But he's listening!"

"No, no," I said, soothingly. "No one is listening. There is no one on this floor but ourselves."

She stopped whispering for a few minutes and her hands were picking the sheets in that way peculiar to dying people. A few minutes interval and she was whispering again; this time more clearly.

"No one listening. At last! Two years ago. But only yesterday. Nurse, are you there?"

"Yes," I said, laying my hand gently on one of hers. "I have got your food here. You must take it now."

Having fed her, she lay quiet for some time, and if it had not been for those wide-open eyes, staring up at the ceiling, I should have thought she was asleep; and then again, as I sat by her bedside in the darkened room, I heard her whispering once more with many pauses.

"He's afraid of my telling—telling you, nurse. But you must know. Go there—see—the place—it was no suicide—poor John—suicide—no—that evil boy did it. I saw it all, he knows I know, from another field he shot at his father with an air gun in front, with his teeth set, and John fell—fell—Ah! always falling!"

Here she suddenly gripped my hand and the image of that scene in the stillness of the night seemed printed on my eyeballs, and my heart was beating fast.

But she was still speaking, and I had to listen:

"And then I screamed at the sight of it and the little good I could do, and he looked up from leaning over his father and through the hedge where I was hiding. I saw murder in his eyes, for he had heard me, and must have known my voice."

Then from a rapid, husky whisper, her voice became weary and sad.

"And he knows I know, but he never speaks of it, only watches me. Two years ago, and I have not told—why should I. But I am dying and will see John again, as when we first married. There was no blood on him then, but always now. Are you near me, nurse? I would not speak, but let them bring it in suicide. He swore he found him dead and I—nurse, hold my hand, I feel so away, away from everything—was afraid of what I had seen, afraid of his being caught. But they said it was suicide. Better so, than the disgrace. But I am dying and it was not suicide."

I cannot express what I felt as those half-whispered words of

misery and tragedy flooded the darkened room. I was shocked, unutterably shocked at the confession, at her cowardice, by the baseness I was surrounded with. My mind, as her words came forth, was in a chaos of doubt, as what to do with the responsibility of this knowledge.

She had let go my hand and her eyes had shut. Was it all a phantom of her brain, the mental wanderings of a human being trembling on the edge of the next world?

It was time for her food, but I found she had fallen into a deep sleep and I did not try to rouse her. So I sat there, thinking over everything, and putting together all I had seen of the son and his attitude to his mother and her confession. I recalled his trying to induce me to withhold food from her, his indifference to her illness, and her continual suspicions of him. All, to my mind, pointed to a secret between them and a great animosity on his part to his mother.

It was getting about seven o'clock in the morning, and I heard the servants moving about the house. I began to put things straight. My patient still lay in a deep coma, very white, very still. I was expecting the doctor about ten o'clock, and was hopeful that the other nurse would get down by twelve o'clock. If so, I could get out and go somewhere. But where, I could not clearly see. I felt I ought to ask for advice, but I still disliked the idea of speaking to the doctor. And then the thought that I would go to the superintendent of police and tell him the whole story suddenly seized me, and the feeling that at least the responsibility would be off my hands, and I should get advice from someone who would look on it in a purely professional manner, made me more cheerful, and was a great relief. Having come to this decision, I applied myself to my work, in order to distract my thoughts.

That morning seemed endless, but at last, to my great relief, I saw the other nurse arrive, and my freedom for the afternoon assured.

And then, after dinner, the time came when I was free for a few hours, and I hastily dressed and went downstairs and out of the front door.

I had hardly gone two steps down the garden-path when I was arrested by a voice, and, looking round, saw, with a sense of repugnance, the face of young Mr. Colcroft, who was lying on a

sofa at the open window of the room which he had been put into at the time of his accident.

- "Where are you going?" he said, almost fretfully.
- "For a walk."

A feeling of aversion and anger rose in me at the sight of the man. All I had heard, all I had seen, made me feel bitterly against him, and my mind revolted at the sight of his pale face and eyes over that window sill. But still I should not have spoken as I did to him, and all my life I shall regret it, looking back on the consequences which it brought in its train.

- "Here," he said, in a low voice, beckoning me towards him. I came one step nearer. "How is mother?"
  - "Dying," I said bluntly.
  - "She was talking last night."
  - "Yes, she had a great deal to tell me, poor thing."
- "What right have you to talk to your patient when she is so ill?" he said angrily, with a flare in his eyes.
- "Mr. Colcroft, if you have anything to complain of, pray tell Dr. Flett. I can easily justify myself. One cannot stop dying people from speaking, but I cannot stay any longer."

Knowing what I did, I was very annoyed at being spoken to like this.

"I am going for a walk," I continued, controlling myself and trying to speak lightly. "Not very far—as far as the police station, I think. It is not very far from here, is it?"

Even as I spoke, his face had got ashy white, and he was beckoning me to come nearer, but in my heedless self-righteousness, I turned and left him.

But the re-action came, and came swiftly, for I had hardly got out of sight of his scared face, before I was assailed by self-reproaches.

The animus which had prompted me to harden my heart and leave him as I had done with those unweighed words upon my lips, was beginning to be succeeded by conflicting doubts and uncertainty of the justice of my feelings towards him.

If he had only let me go on my way without speaking to me, without tempting me to show my prejudice against him, a prejudice which I was beginning to find, in the bright sunshine, and face to face with the healthy realities of the world, becoming more and more difficult to reconcile to myself. For the emo-

tional effect of the confession, with its dramatic surroundings. was fast losing it hold on me, and by the time I entered the police station and asked to see the inspector, the value of that confession never seemed to me less, nor the importance of what I ought to tell smaller. However, bracing myself up, I soon told my story. It seemed so trivial now. But the inspector heard me quietly, without any comments, beyond some questions at the end, and his composed and professional manner put me at ease and took away the nervousness I was beginning again to feel. But when finally he remarked that though it was a case for enquiries to be made, yet there seemed so very little evidence to go on, especially as the chief witness was a dying woman, a sense of regret that I had come to him passed over me. I do not know what I had been expecting, but the interview seemed so wanting in results. And so, when the inspector thanked me, and said I might hear something more about it, I turned to go, but with a feeling of disappointment at my heart.

And then as I retraced my foosteps, I began again to be tormented by my former indecision, alternately upbraiding myself for attaching so much importance to the sayings of a sick woman,—I, a nurse, who had been accustomed to them for years,—and then finding comfort in harking back to my first suspicions of Mr. Colcroft, and trying to justify them by every small circumstance I could recall, doubting and wondering if I had done right I went back.

As I turned the corner and came in sight of the house, I saw a group standing in front, and just then some people passed me, and I caught the words "so public." Quickening my pace I entered the garden. There, before me, I saw the blinds of the house were all pulled down, and I made up my mind my patient was dead. But why were there so many people about the entrance and a policeman at the door? Vaguely connecting the latter in my hurry with my visit to the station, I remember experiencing for a brief period, a slight feeling of self-approval, but at that moment, one of the servants met me in the hair and said something that made my heart stand still.

"He's cut his throat."

I knew at once who the girl meant.

"At the window, just after you left, it must have been, Miss."

A great wave of self-abasement came over me, as her words

reached me. My fault, my fault! But I was being told something more. The words as it were, without a voice, were still coming to me, and I bowed my head.

"The old lady is dead too."

I seemed to be enclosed in granite walls. No way out. And the words went on—facts, facts, facts, but giving me no hope.

"This letter was near Mr. Colcroft, addressed to you."

And then something was put into my hand and I was walking upstairs.

Mechanically I went to my room and shut the door. I sat down on a chair, and in my hand was a crumpled envelope. I did not know the handwriting, only what the maid had said about its being from Mr. Colcroft. I dreaded opening it, having a vague terror that it might convince me of his innocence, and an equal longing impelled me to open it in the hope that I might find some self-justification in it. At last I made up my mind and tore the envelope and drew out a half sheet of note-paper, written closely over.

On it was written in a shaky hand:

"You judged without judgment, but I shall be dead when you get this. You have listened to the vindictive words of a dying woman, and the renewed scandal and publicity of it all I cannot bear. But I am innocent. I did not kill my father, and she knows it."

And that was all. It did not convince me of his innocence, nor did it seem to justify me. Where lay the truth? I knew not, nor has it been discovered. I know that at the inquest which followed, nothing came out, nor did I produce the letter. Why should I, useless as it was now that mother and son were dead.

I was weary of it all, weary of the agony of indecision and mental anguish I had passed through, and the remorse which it had left behind. And even now, though years have rolled by, the memory of it all, of Mr. Colcroft, of the room where I read his letter, and of the part I played in the tragedy, lies heavily on me still, ever before me, ever terrible.

## The Sisterbood of Cameron.

By M. F. W.

Author of "In An OLD GARDEN," "TIM'S ANGEL," etc.

" Human forgiveness touches heaven, and thence Reflected, sends a light on the forgiven."

THERE were only three in the community, and they had no rules, at least, no written ones. And they wore no distinctive dress. The cloisters among which they took their morning walk after prayers were a gravel-path covered with arches of clustering roses and honeysuckle.

"Which are doing very well this year," remarked Sister Martha, surveying them critically, as she snipped off dead leaves, and put them tidily in a basket.

Sister Hester appeared round the corner of the house with a wheelbarrow. She was not wheeling it all at quietly, but came at almost a run. It was very undignified, not to say unorthodox. But then, Sister Hester never could do things like other people. The other two had long ago given up expecting it.

She plumped down the barrow, and sat on one handle.

"It is to be hoped it won't tip up," she said.

"There is a garden-seat there," suggested Sister Martha mildly.

Sister Hester took no notice of the remark.

"Mat," she said, "before we sweep up, I'll just give those roses a turn with the syringe. It will cool them before the heat of the day. You get out of the way, and I will turn on the hose."

Sister Martha had barely time to obey orders before a shower of water was precipitated on the rose arch, giving her a bountiful sprinkling as well.

She shook the drops from her gown with a smile.

"What a child it still is," she said, and then sighed. For the "child" was fifty, and she was the youngest of the three. Her years did not sit very heavily upon her.

Sometimes they wondered if she would ever grow old. The

big brown eyes were as bright with mischief, and the little brown hands as busy as they were twenty years ago. And the light heart was there, too; in spite of all it had gone through.

"You will make the funniest old woman that ever existed," they told her; to which she nodded back saying:

"Very likely."

But her spirits were a very bright element in a house which would otherwise have been very quiet.

When the Sisterhood was first established ten years ago, it was she who originated the name.

"Look here," she said to the others, "we have all arrived at a certain age, and nobody has married us, and people will call us three old maids. Suppose we all live together and call ourselves a Sisterhood. We need not dress up or anything like that, but we might try and—be like a Sisterhood—you know what I mean—do things for other people."

"Try to put some happiness into other people's lives. Even if we cannot have it ourselves," said Martha softly.

"That's it, Mattie, you always know how to express it," declared Sister Hester.

And gentle Sister Evelyn, with her blue eyes shining, whispered: "Inasmuch as ye did it—ye did it unto Me."

It was thus that the Sisterhood had been founded in the little house down the lane. Few outsiders knew of it, but there were tired workers from big towns whose thoughts flew back with loving gratitude to the home where they had found rest and enjoyment, and very genuine sisterly sympathy during many a hard-earned holiday.

The income of the Sisterhood was not large; but when luxuries are not required, money has a wonderful power of expansion, and the little guest chamber was the brightest and sunniest in the house, smiling a welcome to the traveller and sweet with flowers, whatever wintry gales might rage without.

Sister Evelyn always arranged these flowers, for by mutual consent she did it the best. She was like a flower herself, tall and stately, with roses and lilies mingling in her cheek. People wendered greatly why Miss Cameron had not married, for she was a beautiful woman now, in spite of her years.

But the Sisterhood did not divulge its secrets. Even to one another they never spoke of what each knew. Locked away

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upstairs, and hidden deep in three loving hearts there were faded flowers and memories which would never bloom again until the day when every longing will be "satisfied." Even now, the thorn was blossoming in roses for others, and the crushed flowers gave forth a fragrance more sweet than when they stood erect and beautiful on their stems.

"Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out."

Sister Martha repeated the words to herself.

"We have had the north wind of adversity to brace us," she said; "and the south wind of love; and now—are the spices flowing out? Evelyn is so peaceful, and Hester so bright, while I am so tempestuous, so harsh, so dull. They seem to have learnt their lessons, while I still find it so hard."

She folded her hands more tightly together. "Lie still, rebellious heart," she whispered, "lie still, and learn your lesson of patience."

Then she went down to help the others.

It was a busy morning. The greenhouse was having its annual "turn-out." This always took place every year, when the "spring-cleaning" of the house was finished. It involved much moving of plants, a great blocking-up of the narrow pathway with pots; and consequent difficulty of moving without doing damage to some rare specimen by an awkward movement of unruly petticoats. The morning was chosen as the best time, to allow of the floor getting thoroughly dry again after its scrubbing. And then, when every pot and saucer had been washed, dead leaves snipped off, and a judicious amount of water given, everything had to be put back again. It was a long business.

Sister Evelyn stood in the greenhouse and arranged the plants as the others handed them to her. But the greenhouse was low, and Sister Evelyn was tall. Moreover there was a rose trailing all along its roof.

When she lifted her head from bending to arrange some treasure, either hat, or hair, was caught and securely held prisoner by many thorns. This happened on an average every ten minutes; and became monotonous after the first. The flies also were tiresome, and the heat great.

What with stooping, and thorns, and flicking away insects (at

no time very cool work), the Sisterhood began to feel their task by no means a light one.

"We are getting like the three old maids of Lee," remarked Hester, by way of diversion.

## " 'As cross as cross could be."

And this created a laugh, after which they all felt better.

In the evening, when they surveyed their handiwork, they felt quite proud of the result, and did not grudge the labour.

Only they were in easy-chairs then, with shawls on; for even June evenings are apt to feel chilly when one is not quite so young as one was. And the gravel path was quite tidy again, and there was nothing to break the stillness except a nightingale making the twilight musical with his long trill. One or two stars smiled down at them out of the soft blue space.

It was on evenings like these that the Sisterhood went back to their past lives. With tremulous lips and hushed voices they spoke of the dear ones waiting for the morning in the little churchyard on the hill; feeling not so much that they had gone from them, as that they were nearer and dearer and more precious since the light from that other land had touched them.

Then their vein would change, and with unshed tears still trembling on their lashes, they would laugh over some childish escapade, and enjoy the old jokes as if they were new.

There was only one subject on which they rarely touched; and yet it held the secret of their lives. It was not much of a history, and could be told in a few words. They had only done what hundreds of women have done before them, and will do again. There had been a big house in the country, full of comforts, and fun, and happy days. Tennis in the garden, boating on the river, horses to ride and hunt. Then Fortune turned her wheel, and house and money fled as before a fairy touch.

The fingers which had been busy over fancy work had now to make their owners' clothes; the light feet had to run on another's errands; the merry voices hushed to the proper decorum of reading to an invalid. They did not mind, they were young. Life stretched in a long, smiling vista before them. A few short years of this working, then it would be over; and, perhaps—the future melted into a misty glamour of happy homes, little children's faces, and a strong right arm working

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and protecting. That is what the governess, and nurse, and companion said to themselves when they rested from their days' labours, and the twilight hid their shy smiles and blushes.

It is a good thing to have an incentive for work, and they worked so willingly in those days. There were younger ones, brothers, to be educated and started in life, and the tender sister-feeling determined there should be no lack. So they sang over their difficulties and laughed the hardships to scorn. They gave up the little pleasures, and wore shabby dresses, and smiled when reports of progress came from school or college.

And the years passed—swiftly on the whole; but with days which were of necessity long and weary. For even the bravest heart cannot always be bright, and will have its dark times when the human nature seems quite to have gained the mastery over the divine, if only to prove to us how very weak and helpless we are.

It was when the boys grew up and began to look out for themselves that the hardest trial came. They were grateful to their sisters, but perhaps they took their devotion a little too much for granted. They, too, had hopes, aspirations, dreams. Also, they had come to look upon the sisters as having got past the stage of wanting anything very much; and they did not understand waiting. It was natural, perhaps, but it hurt.

The sisters saw the dreams of their lives becoming realities in those of the brothers. They saw other girls entering into the place which had been theirs, and no one seemed to mind. There was some bitterness, too; and words spoken in the first heat of wounded feelings which they would have given worlds to recall. Then the storm-cloud and sunshine alike faded away, and were followed by days of dull, monotonous calm. It was fortunate for them that a necessity for work still existed. Division of the already limited income did not improve matters for the family, and the busy hands might not yet rest.

Only, the glamour was gone.

The years which developed the young ones took the bloom from their elders' cheeks, and the lightness from their feet. Unconsciously they had grown quieter and graver. Time had cooled former friendships, and circumstances formed new ties in the lives which were once very near their own.

They knew it was all right; but the battle was none the less

hard. They set to work again; this time for themselves—and it was not half so pleasant. The world said "What a shame," at first; and then went on its way in self-absorbed forgetfulness.

Only there were the long, colourless days to be lived by the sisters themselves. It was not their nature to moan and let outsiders see their innermost secrets. But, sometimes, when they were alone on a quiet evening, the bitterness of it, and the pity of it, came over them with renewed intensity.

Back would come crowding the thousand memories of those sweet "might have beens;" the pleasures given up, the seeming wasted affection and self-denial, which had been offered and thrown away with careless hands. It seemed impossible to forgive the heartlessness of it all.

That is what made the sting in their lives, and took the sweetness out of all that past toil. It seemed impossible to get rid of it. It seemed to cling even when circumstances grew a little brighter, and an unexpected legacy enabled them once more to live together, and form the community suggested by Hester.

They settled down very quietly in the little cottage.

"But it is not good to be too quiet," said Sister Hester, "and as Thursday is Eve's birthday, I think we might just as well have a little outing."

Sister Evelyn suggested they were getting too old to keep birthdays, but Sister Hester refused to listen.

"I am not going to be old before my time," she said, "and I don't see why we should not eat our tea in the woods as well as at home. Yours is the only birthday which comes at a decent time of year, and we may as well all enjoy it."

She was very busy after that, making preparations. Everything had to be done by herself, even to the rubbing up of a kettle and spirit-lamp to boil the water for tea. The others caught the infection of her spirits and became quite interested in the proceedings.

It was a most perfect June day when the village fly drew up to the door and embarked its three passengers for the "treat." Sister Hester, from her back seat, regarded the other two with smiles. In childish days, the most comfortable place, facing the horses, had been designated by them "the old lady's place," and was much coveted whenever a vacancy occurred. Now, they scrupulously took it by turns, Sister Evelyn insisting on waiving

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her rights as well as her juniors. To-day, of course, being queen of the feast, she was allotted the post of honour for the afternoon.

Sister Martha shared it with reluctance.

"You ought to be here first, Hester," she said, "as you thought of it."

"I am perfectly comfortable here, thank you," returned Sister Hester calmly, arranging the Holland rug over her knees.

Her little brown face was quite puckered up with smiles, while her eyes twinkled with mischief from under her bonnet. She was evidently quite determined to enjoy herself; and it would as surely be in her own way. It was never quite certain what line that might take. Her sisters had not very long to wait that afternoon.

The drive was scarcely begun before a sudden idea struck her.

"I think," she said, "that I might as well come and sit with you two. There is plenty of room, and I am not very big."

To say the others were dismayed is a mild form of expression. There was plenty of room, no doubt, for the seat was old-fashioned and capacious. And they would not have minded, in the least, being crowded on such an occasion as the present one. But the look of it!

Custom does not generally permit three ladies of a certain age all to sit facing the horses, when there is another seat absolutely vacant in front of them. It would look so odd, and they were so well known; and what would the village people say? Suppose, too, they met any of their friends!

In vain the two ladies urged these, and many like objections. In vain they both offered to vacate their positions and leave Hester undisputed possession—a proposition which met with the utmost scorn, as fulfilling no object whatever.

Hester calmly transferred her neat little person to their centre, mildly hoping that she was not taking up too much room.

"Suppose the driver should look round," suggested Sister Evelyn, in a last faint remonstrance.

"It won't do him any harm," remarked Hester, " and he won't do it if you do not talk so loudly."

There was nothing more to be said, and the drive proceeded. Fortunately for their peace of mind, they met no one except a few children returning from school; who only saw a somewhat

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shabby, open fly, with three ladies in neat black bonnets. sitting in a row. To the rustic mind it did not convey anything very peculiar.

If Sister Hester had confessed what was the real longing down in the depths of her heart, it would have been to mount the box and urge into a somewhat quicker pace the respectable animal now ambling along at the orthodox jog-trot. For she dearly loved horses, and was never happier in old days than when going straight across country, or taking her mother round the parish in the more sober pony-carriage. Now, there were no horses, either to ride or drive, so she gave other people pleasure in hired flys; and grew very light-hearted over the doing of it.

The picnic in the woods was a great success. Whatever age one is, bread and butter seems sweeter in the open air, and tea more refreshing. At least, that is what the driver thought when he came in for his share, eating it under an oak-tree, with flecks of light glinting through.

The Sisters were wandering about then, picking handfuls of wild roses and honeysuckle to fill the old china bowls at home.

It was nearly seven o'clock when they returned.

That was the last day they had to themselves for a long time. The summer was always a busy season to them; for what time of year is better to have your friends than when trees are green, and fruit and flowers are plentiful? So the guest-chamber was in constant requisition, only parting with one occupant to receive another immediately. It blossomed out into new curtains, too; the old ones being removed to Sister Martha's bedroom.

Then followed small festivities of every description to entertain their various guests. Down on the beach at the little fishing hamlet so conveniently near, the tired little governess thought cold beef and plum cake never tasted so delicious, while she drank in the fresh sea breeze, which was smoothing out the lines in her forehead and painting pink roses on her cheeks. The hospital nurse tore her veil on the blackberry bushes in the lanes, and laughed while she filled her basket with the fruit which was to make the children's ward wish that Nurse Blackie "went into the country every day." Mr. Jones's little daughter from that East End vicarage looked back to her fortnight at the cottage as a very red-letter time in her life.

"For she is not much more than a child herself, you know,

dear, though she is the eldest of that large family. And I am sure she never has time to have any pleasure, so we must give her as much fun as we can. One is only young once."

So Miss Jones went to tennis parties and picnics; and found little trifles of ribbons and laces and gloves, appearing unexpectedly upon her dressing table, to replenish her scanty wardrobe and delight her girlish heart.

It seemed like a fairy story to the little brothers and sisters who crowded round to hear the news when she went back. They knew it all by heart at last; the garden where she might sit all day if she liked, and read story-books or pick flowers. And the other big gardens where she went in the afternoons, in her best frock, and played tennis and had wonderful teas. Some of the little words of love and sympathy, too, they heard, which had sent her back strong and brave to her work.

But there was one thing they never heard anything of for a very long time, until somebody came from that same fairyland and took Miss Jones to live there "for always;" and opened the gates of the enchanted palace to the brothers and sisters.

When the brown leaves had silently fallen, letting the blue sky peep again through the branches, and autumn was fading into winter, the guest chamber was empty for a while, and the Sisterhood were busy. There was much to prepare for Christmas. Bright wools and knitting-needles took the place of garden gloves and baskets. Sister Evelyn looked to her store-cupboard to see if the supply of currants and plums could bear the demand they would be called on to supply. Sister Martha furrowed her brows over the account-book as she calculated how much they might spend. For she always kept the accounts.

"They are dry and rugged, and they suit me," she said, and then she sighed a little, and lifted her eyes to nod to the bright face passing the window on its way from a parish visit.

"Sweet Evelyn, like Mary, sitting at His feet," whispered Sister Martha to herself, "while I, like my namesake, am cumbered with earthly things. May God help this weary heart to find rest in Him."

Even the joy of Christmas-tide cannot always take away the sadness which underlies most of our lives. The blanks are apt to be felt when the little presents are planned and the list shows many vacant places.

Sister Evelyn laid hers down very quietly.

"It is twenty years," she said, "since we had to make any boy's things."

They so rarely mentioned it that the other two started.

Hester went on sharpening her pencil slowly while Martha tied the knot of a parcel so tightly that the string broke.

"It is not our fault," she said drily.

"No: they might have had presents all this time if they liked," said Hester. Her heart had always been with "the boys." From earliest days she joined their escapades and shared their scrapes. Upstairs, hidden away in a drawer, were various walking-sticks, put by at different times with an unacknowledged wish that they might find an owner some day. But so many Christmas Days had passed, and no one came to claim them.

"I know all that," went on Evelyn's voice, "only—I have been thinking lately——" she hesitated and looked wistfully at Martha, "it is so many years ago, and we were all angry, and perhaps if we had tried to understand each other a little better——"

Still Martha made no answer. She was very busy retying the parcel with a fresh piece of string.

"We always had hot tempers," said Hester, "blinking hard to restrain some suspicious drops on her eye-lashes.

"It is not easy," said Evelyn, "but I keep thinking of it. And we are not young now, and every day brings us nearer to the time when we, too, shall need forgiveness."

Sister Martha left the parcel and pressed her own lips on the trembling ones which could not finish their sentence.

"Eve," she said, "Eve, it is the waste of your life that I mind most, not my own."

Her breast was heaving as she left the room.

The subject was not mentioned again. What each thought or felt lay locked up in the sacred silence which is only possible among hearts whose love is very deep. They went about their daily tasks, and found them all too many for the time. There was not a spare moment from morning till night. The busy fingers ached a little, but the pile of socks, and shawls, and comforters grew larger. The store cupboard became almost empty, but the kitchen was full of good things.

It was quite a relief when Christmas Eve came, and they could sit down for an hour's well-earned rest.

Everything was distributed; they had decked the cottage with sprigs of holly, and the bit of mistletoe, which Sister Hester refused to omit. They had had the school children to sing carols, and sent them away happy in the possession of oranges and pennies; and then they sat round the fire and talked it all over. How they hoped the hampers had all reached their destination; and whether Widow Green would enjoy her pudding, and old Joseph his tobacco.

A loud ring at the front door did not much disturb them.

"Some one sent us a present," said Hester gleefully, "that is paper rustling, I'm sure."

Sister Martha laughed.

"Well, it seems too big for Eliza to bring in. I had better help her."

She opened the door and then stopped, with her hand on the lock.

For it was not a parcel which the little maid ushered to the door, and left standing on its threshold. There was a full minute's pause while the stranger in the doorway looked round the bright little room, and at the three faces turned expectantly to his own.

Sister Evelyn leaned forward with arms half stretched out, and shining eyes. Not a muscle moved of the quiet figure by the door. Hester alone found words to speak the old name which had not been heard for twenty years.

"Poodles!"

Under the bronzed cheek of the bearded man rushed the same warm colour which had kindled the boy's.

"I did not mean to disturb you, or to come in," he said "but I thought I should just like to see you to-night. I know that I behaved like a brute once, and I have wanted to tell you so, and——"

"Come in," said Sister Evelyn.

He gave her back as warm a look of love as her own.

"Dear old Eve," he said, "it is awfully good of you, when I helped to spoil your life. I didn't know then," he went on, a little pleadingly, "and I thought you did not understand my love for Lucy. It is so many years ago, and she is dead now; and no

one seemed to care. But I did often think of the old days; and it seemed just like them to-night when I came into the hall and saw the bit of mistletoe."

He called up the ghost of a smile, as he tried to steady his voice. There were tears raining down the face which looked back at him.

"Come in," said Sister Hester.

"I don't think I ought," went on the man. "It was really only to tell you I am sorry that I came back to-night. I came across Jackson in the Bush, Martha, and then I knew what you had given up for me. It seems as if I could do nothing to make up for all these lost years; and we have been misunderstanding each other all the time."

The thin white hand holding the door came down and rested softly on the brown, weather-beaten one.

"Come in," said Sister Martha.

And he went in.

The Sisterhood are very happy. They have tasted the divine joy of forgiveness, and their hearts are full of a peace which the world can never take away. Only they have had to change their name, because as Sister Hester remarked, "You cannot have a Sisterhood with boys in it!"

## Under a Grey Veil.

BY MAX PIREAU.

PART I .- Continued.

### CHAPTER III.

### AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

THE weeks flew by. Ruth found the work hard, but it was brightened by the warm interest the girl was beginning to take in it, and by the strange one-sided affection which she felt for Evelyn Harrison. One-sided, for Evelyn was utterly incapable of repaying one half of Ruth's unselfish affection. But natures like Ruth Winter's must have something to love; and Evelyn was so pretty, so altogether fascinating, and yet withal so frail and childish, that her beauty seemed rather an appeal to one's pity than a proud exaction of admiration. Ruth soon grew to feel towards her like a devoted elder sister, whose responsibilities sometimes weighed rather heavily. For Evelyn was very vain. very fond of admiration, and did not particularly care from whom she received it. She used to talk to Ruth by the hour together of her various conquests; of the young subaltern who had vowed to blow his brains out if she would not accept him,—" As if it were likely I should marry a boy of twenty, with nothing but his pay and a wretched stipend of £200 a year, which his father allows him," said Evelyn in injured tones; of the grizzled old veteran, her father's friend, who had laid his elderly heart and a respectable fortune of some £30,000 at her dainty feet. really had thoughts of taking him," she added naïvely, " only he was so fearfully ugly, and a regular old pepper-pot;" of the Ritualistic curate, whom her charms so far overcame that for six weeks his vows respecting the celibacy of the clergy tottered on the brink of destruction.

She told Ruth about all these with a curious mingling of worldly prudence and childish vanity; but there was one subject on which she preserved a resolute silence. She never willingly mentioned Dr. Carnegie's name. Yet Ruth could not think she was utterly indifferent to him. She had her feelings very well

under control, yet a close observer could not but see the tell-tale blush which rose to her cheeks whenever the doctor addressed her in the wards. His manner to her was much the same as towards the other probationers, and if Ruth occasionally fancied she detected a shade of warmer interest in his glance, when he bent it on the beauty of the hospital, it might have been only the impersonal interest of an artist—for Dudley Carnegie, as Ruth had discovered by this time, was an artist of no mean calibre. But, at this point of her meditations Ruth was apt to pull herself up impatiently, vexed that, do what she would, her thoughts seemed inevitably to tend to one channel.

Evelvn and she had many a pleasant ramble together about the quaint old cathedral city, in the few hours of relaxation which the rules of the hospital allowed. Together they climbed the undulating downs which rose wave on wave above the town, and plucked the late sprigs of golden furze-blossom, and caught the far-off gleam of the silver sea. Together, too, they wandered through the dim aisles of the great cathedral, and watched the sunlight falling in patches of rose and azure on the grey stone; together they deciphered the quaint old monumental brasses, and gazed upwards at the tattered flags which hung proudly overhead, telling a mute tale of war and bloodshed, which seemed strangely incongruous with this dim, peaceful seclusion; together they explored quaint nooks and corners of the old-world city, finding every day fresh beauties in the shape of some crumbling monastery wall, half hidden beneath a tangle of ivy and crimson Virginian creeper; some gabled cottage, with a row of tall sunflowers and hollyhocks fronting it; some curious old gateway, with the arms of the city graved upon it.

Kemperton is full of these delicious surprises; and to Ruth, fresh from the noise and dirt and bustle of London, the picturesque old city, which seems to have gone to sleep some two hundred years ago, came as a revelation of beauty and quiet peacefulness, such as she had never dreamed of. Evelyn was far less enthusiastic, yet even she was hardly proof against the seductive charm of those late autumn days, which seemed in their melancholy beauty, peculiarly fitted to the ancient city, with its memories of a noble past.

The quiet time came to an end at last, as all quiet times must. The first change was Evelyn's removal to the night staff, which separated her almost entirely from Ruth. On the rare occasions on which they met she seemed curiously constrained, and Ruth, without knowing why, felt vaguely uneasy about her; but all her attempts to discover if anything were wrong could only elicit the response that Evelyn was feeling done up by the heat of the past summer, and would be better for the lighter work on night duty. Ruth was forced to be content with this, but she could not get rid of a seemingly unwarrantable suspicion that Dudley Carnegie was at the bottom of Evelyn's altered looks. Had he been amusing himself with the child? If he had ——! Ruth set her lips firmly, and her expression was hardly pleasant. The very thought of such a thing was enough to revive the very unfair prejudice she had taken against him on first entering the hospital.

One bleak afternoon in late October, Ruth set out to pay a visit to one of her former patients, a man dying of rapid consumption, who had been discharged from the hospital a week or two before. His was a very ordinary story—early marriage, an incapable wife and a delicate child, hard work and exposure, a dumb, patient struggle for months against increasing weakness, and then—defeat. The case was hopeless from the first, and Kemperton was not a hospital for incurables. So, kindly, but decisively, the doctors had told Kennedy they could do nothing for him, and he had gone back to the dull little cottage he called home, to await the end.

Ruth had been struck by the man's quiet heroism, and had paid him two or three visits, trying to brighten his last days by occasional gifts of flowers and fruit. The last time she had seen him he was failing fast, and this afternoon she was reflecting it could not be long before the end came.

Arriving at the Kennedys' squalid little cottage, she picked her way up the dirty staircase, and halted at a low doorway. There was no response to her knock. Pushing the door ajar, she looked in.

The room was darkened by a torn green blind, which flapped disconsolately in the draught from the ill-fitting window, and presented its usual appearance of poverty-stricken untidiness. On a chair against the wall sat Mrs. Kennedy, her hands lying idle in her lap, her tearless eyes fixed vacantly on the long, white-covered object which stood on a couple of trestles in the

centre of the room. Close by, the baby slept peacefully in its cradle. Mrs. Kennedy did not move or make any sign as Ruth came forward, but when the girl gently took the work-worn hand between her own, looking the sympathy she could not put into words, the drawn face began to work painfully.

"He's gone, nurse," she said, bursting into heavy sobs, and rocking herself to and fro in the abandonment to grief of an undisciplined nature.

Presently, when she was calmer, Ruth drew the coverlet gently away from Kennedy's face, and the two women stood looking down on the dead, the wife's noisy grief checked in unconscious awe of that supreme mystery.

James Kennedy had been a handsome man, and now, with the stamp of the Great Refiner on his face, it reminded Ruth of one of those grand pictures, whereby the Italian masters strove to depict the dead Christ. The sharply-chiselled features might have been carved in ivory; the luxuriant curly black hair and beard were carefully trimmed, the hands were folded in an attitude of prayer, and a rosary of cheap beads placed between the fingers—for the dead man had been a Roman Catholic.

"When-when was it?" asked Ruth gently.

"Last Thursday night, nurse. He'd been restless, and off his head like, all the evening, but about twelve o'clock he seemed to get a bit easier and fell asleep. He didn't stir till nigh on two, and then I heard his breathin' gettin hoarser and more hardlike. I lifted 'im up in the bed—such a feather-weight as he'd grown, nurse—and he looked at me with a kind o' wondering: smile. 'Yes, Molly, I'm a-coming,' he said, quite soft, and next minute he was gone. Oh! my Jim, my Jim!"

"He looks peaceful, doesn't he?" said Ruth, softly.

"Ay." A dim pride struggled through Mary Kennedy's tears. "Ay! he makes a beautiful corpse. Oh, Jim was always a fine-looking chap. I mind when he used to come courtin' me a Sunday nights in his best plaid suit, and a red rose stuck in his button-hole. None of the other girls down our street had such a handsome lover. But oh, nurse, to think that I can't afford 'im a decent funeral, and that he's got to be buried by the parish!"

Evidently this was the culminating drop of bitterness in the poor little childish widow's cup.

Ruth tried to comfort her, and presently, with the sympathetic power which Heaven has somehow bestowed on such women, she did manage to check the gasping sobs, and then she fetched the sleeping baby and laid her in her mother's arms. The poor soul hugged her child, and cried over her a little, and then as the mite awoke and objected loudly to these proceedings, she was fain to hush her to rest once more, and so, by the time Ruth had finished her self-appointed task of reducing the room to something like neatness, Mrs. Kennedy could look up and give her a faint watery smile.

"You've made it look like a different room, nurse, and more fit for him to lie in. He hated a dirty room, did Jim, and many's the time I've seen him look black, when he come home and the place wasn't cleaned up. Somehow, it didn't seem as it it could be kept clean, and the little one so often ailing. Do you know, nurse," continued Mrs. Kennedy thoughtfully, "the woman downstairs thought I wouldn't like to sleep here with him, and she offered to take me and baby in till after the funeral. I told her I took it kindly of her, but Jim had been my husband these five years come Michaelmas, and I wasn't afraid of him now."

Ruth's eyes deepened, as she stooped to kiss the worn brow.

"Now, dear, I must be going, I will come and see you again soon."

Then raising her eyes, she beheld in the doorway the slight boyish figure and curly head of—Dudley Carnegie.

She blushed hotly as the young man came forward.

"Good afternoon, nurse. It is you then, who have been here so often?" he said, with a grave smile. "It is over, I see, Mrs. Kennedy. Poor fellow, I knew he could not last many days. I have been very busy, and could not call before this."

Ruth did not stay to hear more. Nodding a hasty goodbye to Mary Kennedy, she slipped out of the room and down the stairs, to cool her hot cheeks in the keen air outside.

What brought Dr. Carnegie there? He was not the parish doctor, why should he interfere with the parish patients? But here Ruth's conscience smote ber. After all, he must have gone to see the poor fellow out of charity, and she ought not to blame him for doing what she had done herself. Only—she wished he had not come in at that particular moment.

### CHAPTER IV.

#### STUDIES IN SOCIOLOGY.

DR. CARNEGIE made no further allusion to the scene at the Kennedys' cottage, and Ruth was only too happy to think he had forgotten the incident. She went again to see the little widow and found her more cheerful. Truth to tell, Ruth was the more anxious to pay this visit as she wanted to find out what had led Dudley Carnegie thither.

According to Mary Kennedy's rambling account, the doctor had been "real good to her man" after he left the hospital, was "much kinder and cleverer like than the parish doctor," and on the last occasion, after Ruth left, had given her a sovereign, part of which she had expended on buying "a bit o' black" for herself and the baby.

Soon after this Ruth was told she was to be sent on night duty, and was delighted to think she would be with Evelyn once more. Yet, somehow, when she told the latter her news, she could not get rid of an idea that Evelyn was not altogether pleased. To be sure, she kissed Ruth, and said how delightful it would be, yet—

However, when they met next evening in the night room, Evelyn seemed so glad to see her, that Ruth reproached herself for her suspicious thoughts.

She found the night-work trying at first, for hers was one of those impressionable natures which are much influenced by outward surroundings; and there were times when the gloom and silence of the long shadowy ward seemed almost more than she could bear. But she took herself sternly to task for the weakness, and determined to "read hard" by way of diverting her mind from imaginary terrors. She began to turn to the study of a subject in which she had always felt great interest, though rather that of sentiment than of knowledge—the condition of the poorer classes in England, and the reason for that condition. Working as she did among the poor, seeing on all sides suffering which might have been prevented, lives which might have been saved, had the sufferers belonged to another social rank, was it great wonder that the warm-hearted girl began to ask herself,

as so many of us have done—Why? Why should one man be cursed from his birth with-ill-health, unbridled passions, poverty and want, while his brother, through no virtue of his own, is born to wealth and luxury, and the path of straight dealing made plain before him?

The answer to those questions lay deeper than Ruth, in her shallow indignation, ever dreamed. Only after years of seeking, through much pain and patience, should she attain to some faint inkling of the truth.

She began studying Socialistic books of the most pronounced type, hoping to find in them the answer to her questions. But they only served to perplex her still further. This wild denunciation of everyone in power or position, these vague Utopias where all should have an equal chance, and the glaring inequalities which struck this passionate young creature with absolute pain should no longer exist, seemed alike powerless to help the pressing need. Like a true woman, Ruth would rather feel than think, would rather carry out than project. What was the good of writing volume after volume on the miseries of the poor when one had only to open one's eyes to see those miseries? Oh; for someone who would do, who would meet their awful needs with something more than mere sentimental ravings.

Ruth Winter had yet to learn the grand truth embodied in the words—"He that believeth shall not make haste!" It was Dudley Carnegie who was destined to give her the key to these tangled problems, and the manner was in this wise:—

It was about twelve o'clock on a dark and windy night. Ruth was sitting at her little table in the big quiet ward, which was only lighted by her shaded lamp, and by the red glow of the firelight, which made a small oasis of brightness in the shadowy room, throwing a warm light on the girl's tall figure and ruffled chesnut hair. She was not reading. In an access of hopeless disgust she had flung her book on the table, and sat, her hands lying idle in her lap, her brows knitted in perplexity. There was a step in the corridor outside, the door opened, and Dr. Carnegie appeared. Ruth rose to her feet.

"Nurse, can you tell me if there was a child named Carter discharged from this ward last week?"

Ruth gave the required information, and waited for the doctor to depart. But this he seemed in no hurry to do.

"Really, your fire is quite pleasant," he remarked, shivering slightly, and spreading out his hands to the warm glow.

Ruth could not deny him the privilege of warming himself, and certainly he did look cold, but she heartily wished him gone.

She was feeling tired and depressed, and I am afraid even a little cross. Why didn't he go?—surely he was warm now. But he only turned to the table, and took up the book she had just been reading.

"What are you studying now, nurse? Oh!" with an intonation of surprise, as his eyes fell on the title, "this is not medical, I see."

There was a pause. Ruth's cheeks were burning, but she faced him with proud defiance. No doubt he was laughing at her, no doubt he considered women had no business to take any interest in such matters. Well! she could afford to be independent of his opinion.

But when Dudley Carnegie at last broke silence it was in a manner quite different to that which she had expected.

"Do you like this book, nurse?"

The tone was such as one uses in addressing an intellectual equal, and Ruth's vanity was soothed.

"No, I do not," she answered frankly. "I have been reading a good deal of that stamp of work lately, and everything I read only seems to perplex me further. I do not believe there is any light to be got from such books."

"No," said Carnegie, thoughtfully, "I think you will not find the answer to any of the pressing social problems of the day, in that kind of Republican rant. What are your especial difficulties?"

"Oh! I don't know how to put them into words; you will laugh at me, and put me down as one of those very ranters of whom you speak so contemptuously. But can it be right for one man to have more money than he knows what to do with, while another is starving? But," with a nervous little laugh, "you will probably tell me a nurse had better attend to her patients than waste her energy in trying to find out what has brought them to such a state."

"I hope I am not likely to make such an unsympathetic remark," said the young man gravely. "For I too have my own

ideas on the subject. Like you, I have gone through the period of questioning, of distrust in the existing state of things."

"And have you found any solution? Is there any to be found?"

"I think so—rather, I am sure of it. But not in such as this"—he struck his hand impatiently on the book. "If help is to be forthcoming it must be from systematized effort of rich and poor together, not from vague denunciations of one class by the other; from steady perseverance in a fixed course, not from sudden impulses towards some fancied goal."

The words struck Ruth with a sense of reproach. Had not her life so far been a series of sudden impulses?

"Yet is not a certain amount of fanaticism necessary to every cause?"

"Assuredly." Carnegie's eyes flashed with momentary fire. "But the zeal of your fanatic who thoroughly realizes his mission is not a passing flash, which dies away next moment in the ashes of useless despair—it burns with a steady, consuming flame, which will ultimately find its way through every obstacle. I do not think any cause will really prosper, unless at the outset it can command some few fanatics who are ready to risk everything not only their time, their opportunities, their intellect, but even their reputation as sane individuals. Looked at in this light, even these poor fools of demagogues may fulfil a certain purpose, for they are the pioneers, the 'mad-brained enthusiasts' at whom sensible people justly look askance, but who are as really necessary to the true development of social science as Galen, Hippocrates, and the rest of the grand ancients were to the development of medical science. Pioneers, yes, they are just that, and sometimes it may be necessary for a pioneer to state matters strongly. Only unfortunately, many of the poor beggars seem to have mistaken their own vocation, and to be considering the views they hold as an end, not a means to an end."

"I see," said Ruth thoughtfully. "Then you think there is something beyond all this wrangle, something to which this rant about 'purse-proud tyrants' and 'grinding oppression' is tending?"

"Think?—no, I do not think, I am sure of it. How else can one explain it—this devilish mystery of the inequality of things? Excuse me, I am afraid my language is rather strong, but my

feelings sometimes get a bit beyond me in speaking of these things."

"Do not apologize." The girl's voice trembled with a fibre of feeling as intense as his own. "Surely that is the right word to apply to these inequalities of which you speak? But you have given me a light to read them by now. They are devilish, because their source is evil. But we believe, do we not, that good is stronger than evil?"

"Yes," said the young man slowly, with a peculiar intonation, which struck Ruth with a momentary wonder as to its cause. "Yes, I hope that is true."

"Then we must some day find the way to reconcile these conflicting elements. We must, or else give up our faith altogether."

> "Yet we trust that somehow good Shall be the final goal of ill"

quoted Carnegie beneath his breath. "Is that what you mean?"

"Yes," said the girl, eagerly. "Only sometimes—don't think me very womanish and impatient—sometimes the vagueness of that verse has almost irritated me. It seems such a *shadowy* thing to prophesy a possible good coming, perhaps in some faroff future, to these poor creatures who are in such terrible need of help *now*."

"Yet, as it is all the consolation some of them are ever likely to get, is it not well at least to give them that? But you are mistaken if you think these ranting demagogues represent the whole force of Socialist endeavour. There are splendid fellows to be found among the Socialists, men who have given their whole lives, not to talking, but to working for the people. Have you ever read Booth's 'Life and Labour of the People?'"

" No."

"Well then, read it. I have a copy downstairs, and will lend it to you, if you like. You will find there that times have changed since Kingsley wrote 'Alton Locke' and 'Yeast,' though of course what has been done, compared to what remains to be done, is like a puddle left by the tide compared to an ocean. Still a move has been made, and in the right direction."

Ruth was silent, musing on the last words.

"And now," said Carnegie, surely with a faint note of regret in his voice, "I must be off. I have some work to finish downstairs. Don't read any more of that stuff, nurse, but if you want to study the subject, get some books by sensible writers, who are rational citizens first and Socialists after. I will give you a list of books really worth reading—good night."

He held out his hand, which Ruth was perforce obliged to take, though it struck her as a decided infringement of hospital etiquette. But she was tingling with a new sense of intellectual companionship, which the warm hand-clasp seemed to cement, and for the moment was more a woman than a nurse. The doctor disappeared, leaving her to a tumult of conflicting thoughts, predominant among which was the belief that she had misjudged Dudley Carnegie considerably.

### CHAPTER V.

### DEEPENING CURRENTS.

THAT conversation was only the first of many between these two. Next evening he brought her the book he had promised. She set to work on it with her usual impatient avidity, and in a surprisingly short time had mastered the contents (or thought she had), and was asking him for the second volume. To her surprise, he shook his head decisively.

"No, I shall not give you the second yet. I am quite sure you cannot have read that one properly. Did you read the schedules of house to house description?"

"Yes," said Ruth, half laughing, half offended.

"Well, then, you must have seen the description of the state of some of those streets, where the children grow up in an atmosphere of drunkenness, cursing, and every abomination, which has the not surprising effect of turning them into cadgers and loafers, if not into actual criminals. Well, do you think you are going to find any remedy for that, are even going to enter into any other person's scheme of remedy, unless you will bestow on the question a little more thought and trouble than is necessary to skim over in an hour or two a book which years of labour have gone to make? Getting through books in that fashion is all very well for the ordinary novel-reading young

lady, but scarcely worthy of anyone with a more serious purpose in view."

He paused suddenly, as if afraid he had rather overstepped the bounds of politeness. But Ruth, for all her surface vanity, had none of that littleness of mind, which cannot bear a stricture it instinctively feels to be true, and the recollection of those pages of which he spoke drowned all lesser resentment.

"Oh! those streets—they are terrible to read of, all the more so for the business-like, dispassionate way in which the author states his facts. But perhaps you are right. I know I do always tear through a book, for somehow life doesn't seem long enough for all one wants to read. But I suppose this ought not to be hurried through, and perhaps I had better read it again more carefully."

This was a wonderfully meek admission for a young woman not much given to meekness.

Perhaps Dudley Carnegie felt the implied compliment—most men like to be submitted to, and when the submitter happens to be a young and pretty woman with a rather strong will, the charm of the situation is enhanced.

"You are very generous-minded to confess your failings so readily," he said smiling. "I don't think I could do so. But will you forgive me, nurse, if I say I think you want—not more concentration, for you certainly have the gift of throwing yourself completely into what you are doing—but more perseverance. Don't you think you are a little inclined, when half-way to a goal, to turn round and fancy after all you would have done better to work in another direction?"

Ruth opened her eyes slightly. This young man appeared to have been studying her character considerably.

"Possibly; I have not thought much about it," she said, a trifle coldly.

Carnegie saw her change of manner, and though perhaps he did not attribute it to the right cause, changed the conversation instantly, and shortly after, recommending her to read the disputed book through once more, left the ward. Ruth took his advice, and under his guidance, read not only that book, but many others, gathering a clearness of vision and grasp of the subject which was a constant source of mingled pleasure and pain. For the fruit of the tree of knowledge can never be

wholly sweet, and, like Romola dé' Bardi, Ruth could sometimes only distinguish her happiness from pain from the fact of its being what she would choose before all else. And day by day, as she moved to and fro among her sick, or sat in the dim ward with her books around her, or discussed with Carnegie some knotty social problem which was agitating men's minds, there grew up in her own a slow conviction that for her too there awaited a part in this work of social redemption, that she too should take rank amongst the world's strugglers, should strive and toil, and if need be suffer, but should ultimately conquer in the grim war against injustice, selfishness and oppression. Vain dreams, the offspring of a sentimental brain, do you say? Yet God help us if ever the day shall come when England's sons and daughters have ceased to dream such dreams!

And what of Evelyn all this time?

Well! it was inevitable that the new aims and ideals which were gradually becoming the hidden motive-power of Ruth's life, should insensibly separate her from pretty butterfly Evelyn. Ruth fought hard against the mental process which she felt to be taking place, and even attempted to arouse in her friend some kindred spark of enthusiasm, by describing to her some of the facts of East End life which had impressed themselves most vividly on her imagination. But Evelyn only shuddered, and said how horrible it all was, and begged Ruth not to tell her any more dreadful stories. She said they kept her awake in her sleeping hours, but I have my doubts on that point.

Somehow, Ruth could not bring herself to tell Evelyn that she was studying these subjects under Dr. Carnegie's guidance. She felt instinctively that her friend would misapprehend the position, and might even—detestable thought—imagine that, under cover of Socialistic studies, she was carrying on an ordinary flirtation with the house surgeon. Poor Ruth was terribly self-conscious, and these ideas, though vague and indeterminate, were sufficient to keep her from fully confiding in Evelyn. If the latter suspected anything of Dr. Carnegie's frequent visits to Ruth's ward, she made no remark, and appeared much as usual.

So matters went on for some weeks, until the Christmas festival was close at hand. Just a week before the 25th, the warm muggy weather which had been prevalent broke up and

a sharp frost set in, turning the ponds all round Kemperton to sheets of ice, and making the steep main street of the city a dangerous one to any but sure-footed pedestrians. The hospital was proportionately busy, and Ruth found her hands full in the accident ward. Everyone had more than their usual share of work, but, for the most part, everyone took it good-temperedly. It was only a few inveterate grumblers who complained of the extra work involved by the preparations for Christmas festivities.

The scene in the central ward on the evening of the 25th was a gay one; the brilliant decorations on the walls, the smiling faces of visitors, patients and nurses, and at one end of the room, a gigantic fir-tree, with its sparkling burden of fruit, toys and candles.

Even Mrs. Denbigh thawed under the genial influence of the hour, and rustled about in her best black silk, conducting visitors round the building with an air of lofty urbanity. As to Ruth, she threw herself into the enjoyment of the moment like a child, and was here, there, and everywhere.

"Ah! Mrs. Humphreys, you would like something from the tree that you can send to your little boys, wouldn't you?" she said, as she came to the bedside of a thin, care-worn woman, who lay languidly watching the busy scene.

The woman smiled faintly at the bright face bent above her.

"Thank you, nurse. Yes, I suppose they'd like some of them things."

The words were spoken listlessly, as if the speaker did not care much. Ruth stooped closer.

"Is anything wrong, Mrs. Humphreys? Are you not feeling so well to-night?"

The woman's eyes filled with tears, and her lip quivered.

"No, I'm all right, at least, as well as I ever shall be. But—oh, it's no matter—I don't want to bother you, nurse, just when you are so busy."

"I am not a bit busy. And I am not going to stir from here till you tell me."

"Well then, nurse, it was the dinner."

"The dinner," echoed Ruth, in a bewildered tone. "Why, wasn't it good then?"

"Oh, yes, it was good, too good to be wasted as it was. You

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see, nurse, it's like this. They brought me a beautiful plateful of beef and vegetables, but I couldn't eat it. Time was, if I could ha' got a few meals like that, it might ha' made all the difference to me, but now I don't seem to care about it. But I couldn't help thinking o' my two poor little lads, and how they would ha' enjoyed it. It's little Christmas they'll get, for Tom—that's my man—has been out o' work for the last fortnight, and now I'm ill I can't earn a shilling here and there. It does seem hard that them as can have, don't want, and them as do, can't get."

: She ended with a weary sigh, and Ruth sat silently thinking over the last words.

Presently she got up, and comforting Mrs. Humphreys with the promise that Teddy and Willy should have something good to-morrow, went off to distribute the rest of her gifts. But she laughed no more that evening.

If Ruth was silent and preoccupied, Evelyn made up for all deficiencies. She was looking lovely to-night, with a heightened colour due either to the heat or to some inward excitement, and her great brown eyes shining brilliantly. Once Ruth, happening to glance towards the now denuded Christmas-tree, saw Evelyn standing beneath its shadow, with Dudley Carnegie by her side. He was smiling down on his pretty companion as he made some low-toned remark, and as Ruth looked, she saw the quick blush rise to Evelyn's cheek, and her soft laugh rang out.

Ruth turned away sharply, with an indefinable feeling of pain.

(To be continued.)

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# BELGRAVIA.

APRIL, 1896.

## Joan & Mrs. Carr.

By "RITA."

Author of "PEG THE RAKE," "SHEBA," "ASENATH OF THE FORD,"
"THE ENDING OF MY DAY," etc.

### CHAPTER XVII.

### FASHION GOES A-FOOLING.

THE first day of the Ditton Regatta was ushered in by bright sky and brilliant sunshine.

Hundreds of yachts had come in from different places, and were moored in line either side of the harbour, and dressed with flags from stem to stern, forming a gay and brilliant foreground to the sloping, tree-covered banks and the stone quay front.

Captain Talbot's yacht was not a racer. It was a useful and comfortable little vessel of about fifty tons, that seemed almost insignificant beside the big steam yachts and miniature floating palaces of millionaires and wealthy lordlings. He had engaged a little steam launch for the three days of the regatta, so that they might see the racing to better advantage; and when Joan and Mrs. Carr came down the sloping hill path at noon, they found it waiting them at the landing-steps.

"It's very pretty, but it doesn't beat Queenstown," said Mrs. Carr, as she surveyed the brilliant scene—the fluttering flags, the gaily-dressed crowds on the quay, the display of bunting in the town, the crowd of boats and launches and steamers plying to and fro the lovely harbour.

She leant back on the cushions and opened her scarlet sunshade, conscious that she made a brilliant picture, and an effective one. She had brought a supply of cushions with her to the cottage to suit every costume she might choose to wear, knowing well that cushions and sunshades go far to making a river picture.

She herself wore a Redfern gown of navy blue, with a blouse of silk of the same colour, and a scarlet sailor collar, and a plain white sailor hat. Joan was in cream serge with a touch of orange at the throat and sleeves, and a yachting cap. Captain Talbot thought that neither launch, nor boat, nor yacht deck could show two handsomer women, and he was not far out in his opinion.

A few insignificant races had already taken place—sailing boats and cutters and dingheys had competed for the prizes. The great race for the challenge cup of one hundred guineas would not take place till after luncheon time.

By one o'clock the crowd had increased by thousands. Excursions from all the principal towns and seaside resorts had poured in, and the harbour frontage was a sea of heads from end to end.

Further to the right were the canvas booths—the shooting galleries and merry-go-rounds of the travelling show. The charms of the Fat Lady were pictorially displayed outside her own tent in contrast to the miniature proportions of the dwarf who was her rival attraction. A spotted woman and a ferocious being dressed like an Indian chief, but possessed of a strong Whitechapel accent, were loudly proclaimed as the Leopard lady and the great sword swallower. Menageries, performing monkeys, dogs, a preserved mermaid, an untamed lion, and a very tame seal were among the attractions, and prize-fighters and waxworks, penny toys, and ginger-beer and ginger-bread, all clamoured for patronage; while the steam whistles of the switchback, and the deafening music and mechanism of the wooden horses set up their claims to public notice.

After luncheon the yachts were deserted for these attractions. Crowds of well-dressed women, and men in yachting attire, promenaded the harbour banks or visited the show, or made up parties for the merry-go-rounds, which had been made fashionable one season by a Royal Prince.

Mrs. Carr was amused and surprised at this new whim of fashion. She stood and watched the whirling crowd—the flying skirts which Redfern or Doré had cut, the dainty hats, the

well-groomed, sun-burnt men in their flannels sitting astride their wooden steeds—and wondered what people would do next!

A sort of mania seemed to possess them. Twopenny rides mounted into shillings and half-sovereigns. Fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, young men and maidens, old men and girls, with flying hair and short skirts, all bestrode this whirling round-about, while the "Old Kent Road," and the "Man from Monte Carlo," clanged in brazen monotony, and the steam whistles screamed and the laughter and din of voices were as deafening as the clanging machinery.

"That's nothing to what it will be to-night," said Captain Talbot. "The band plays over there, and the people dance till midnight. All this is illuminated"—he pointed to the wide, square frontage where the crowd moved to and fro—" and most of the grounds facing the harbour. The fireworks begin about half-past eight, which reminds me I have ordered dinner at the hotel. I hope you won't mind. It will be so troublesome for you to return home."

"Mind? Not a bit. I should prefer it," said Mrs. Carr, not at all averse to displaying her well-made costume to an appreciative crowd, and with still a hope that somewhere among them she might discover an acquaintance.

They went back to the yacht for tea, sitting on deck under a striped awning, and sipping delicious Souchong out of dainty Japanese cups, while boats passed to and fro, and nigger minstrels sang comic songs, and the twanging of banjos and mandolines mingled with light laughter and merry jests from the yachts around.

A huge white vessel, flying the American flag, and more like an Atlantic liner than a steam yacht, had attracted Mrs. Carr's notice several times during the day. It had come into the harbour late the previous night, and was moored far behind theirown line.

"I hear it belongs to a rich American," said Captain Talbot, who had been moved by her curiosity to make necessary enquiries. "A Mr. Ephraim Stoat from New York. He has steamed over. There is a large party on board, and my man told me that the *chef* is paid a salary of eighty dollars a week."

Mrs. Carr sighed enviously.

"Those Americans are so disgracefully rich," she said. "It

is quite horrible. How do they manage to make so much money?"

"By not being too particular as to the means, I should say," answered Captain Talbot.

Mrs. Carr was looking through the glass at the object of her envy. She could discern a host of people moving about—a crowd of gaily-cushioned basket-chairs, yachting caps and sailor hats, serge dresses, fluttering ribbons. She put down the glass and took a slice of cake.

"I wonder," she said, "you didn't ask some of your Ditton friends on board."

"I think they prefer the land," he answered. "They seldom come out till the evening. But I have asked them to lunch to-morrow. I hope you will join us?"

Mrs. Carr was about to reply when an exclamation from Joan startled her. She looked up and saw a boat passing them, containing two women and a man. One of the women was Lady Kate.

Mrs. Carr left her seat and went quickly forward, and hailed her friend with effusion.

"I was looking for you," said that lady, as the man stayed the boat by the little accommodation-ladder. "I made sure you'd be somewhere here, but I'd forgotten the name of Captain Talbot's yacht. Yes, I'll come up."

She said something to the other occupants of the boat, and then stepped on deck and shook hands with them all, while Captain Talbot brought forward a chair, and Joan poured her out a cup of tea.

"I've had such a good time," said Lady Kate. "I was on Lord Orphet's yacht at Cowes. Such a beauty!" She gave a disparaging glance at her present limited accommodation. "He didn't come on here," she continued. "Those are Americans I'm with; rolling in money, my dear. Such luxury! I'm mad with envy. They've got a very large party on board; all sorts and conditions, you know. Mostly American. All come over from New York and are going round the world, I believe. The great actor, M'Dermot, is among them. He's just a lovely man, as they say! Not a bit American, but charming. I believe he went out very young, and took to the stage; of course you've heard of him?"

"Of course," said Joan, quietly. "He is to them what Henry Irving is to us."

"He recites sometimes of an evening," went on Lady Kate. "Such a lovely voice—like music. To hear him is like having your heart drawn out by red-hot pincers; and Tommy Attwood is with us too! He's so jealous of M'Dermot, for all the women are just mad about him. First time he's ever been in England. His voice reminds me of yours sometimes; the accent, I mean. I'm sure he's Irish, but he always says not. It sounds like an Irish name, doesn't it?"

"Yes, decidedly," said Mrs. Carr. "Still, it mayn't be his own. Actors and actresses generally go in for something fanciful and high sounding."

"And how do you like being here?" went on Lady Kate.
"What are the natives like? I see the Counsellor is still devoted."

"Hush!" said Mrs. Carr with a warning glance at Joan, who was leaning over the side of the yacht beside the captain.

"Is it a case of 'little pitchers'?" asked Lady Kate maliciously. She knew Joan did not like her, and resented the fact as being impertinent in a girl who was newly "out," and had no business to have opinions. "You must find her interfere sadly with you, my dear. I should marry her off as soon as possible, if I were you. Are there no eligible young men on that island, or peninsula, or whatever it is where you are located?"

Mrs. Carr laughed.

"Oh, yes," she said, "but Joan doesn't seem to care for young men, and really I don't want to bother her about getting married until it's absolutely necessary."

Lady Kate stared.

"It's plain you never were a mother," she said. "I mean to settle my two brats as soon as ever they're out of the school-room. Girls are so fearfully in the way, and so fearfully inquisitive."

"Joan is neither," said Mrs. Carr quietly.

"Oh! you are infatuated about her; she is like all other girls, I suppose. But now tell me something about the people, and how you amuse yourself."

Mrs. Carr rattled off the "county" names, and described the

women and the dinner party so minutely that Lady Kate screamed with delight.

"You'll get plenty of fun out of them," she said. "Why don't you flirt with Mrs.—what's her name?—Johnnie's husband, and set her back up?"

"I don't think he knows how to flirt," said Mrs. Carr. "He's heavy and stupid, and seems awfully frightened of her.

"Well, then, the admiral; the only way to wake up a country place is to flirt with the married men or women. Scandal is the one thing they live for."

"Yes; but it's not very pleasant for the person who makes it."

"My dear, you'd wriggle out of anything. But I must be going. I told you I could only stay a few moments. Come and lunch with me to-morrow, will you, on the yacht? and I'll introduce you to M'Dermot, only, mind you—fair play!"

"What about Joan?" asked Mrs. Carr. "I know you don't want her. Oh—I know—I'll send her over to the old ladies, our neighbours. They asked her to come in, and it will be a very good excuse."

"As you please," said Lady Kate. "I shall be delighted if you'll bring her, but she's sure to be shocked, and her eyes are like a standing rebuke to me."

"And to me—sometimes," thought Mrs. Carr in her heart, but she did not say so.

Her friend took herself off then, and was rowed back to the imposing-looking vessel that was only designated "yacht" by courtesy. Mrs. Carr watched her with something like envy, as she thought how many of the good things of this life Lady Kate always managed to attach to her own unattachable person.

"I shall not be able to lunch here to-morrow," she said to Captain Talbot, as he returned from seeing off their visitor. "Lady Kate has asked me to the big yacht over there. I'm curious to see it. You'll excuse me, won't you?"

"I must, I suppose," he answered regretfully. "But my party will suffer from your absence. Is Miss O'Rourke also going?"

"No," said Mrs. Carr, "she's not asked; somehow she doesn't hit it off with Lady Kate."

"I am not surprised at that," said the captain. "They are very different types of women—if I may say so. If only Lady

Kate was not known to be an earl's daughter, and quite insociety, and received everywhere, one might almost feel inclined to say she was a little—vulgar."

Mrs. Carr laughed.

"Oh! we are all vulgar, nowadays," she said; "it's a way we've got into. You can't say anything worse of a woman than that she's very 'ladylike.' It's as bad as saying she's 'genteel.' It means she's slow, and a bore, and has no *chic*, and is very particular whom she knows, and won't listen to Chevalier, or Lottie Collins, or Arthur Roberts, unless at a *matinie* at Drury Lane—for charity."

"Which means that Lady Kate and her set would go to the real thing—the Palace, or Pavilion, or Empire—and say so?"

"Exactly. There's no hard and fast line drawn as to what society may, or may not do, if only it pleases to do it. I found that out very quickly in my first London season."

Captain Talbot looked at Joan, still leaning against the side of the yacht, and gazing with absorbed and musing eyes at the brilliant scene before and around her. Somehow he felt glad as he watched her that she had not yet been plunged into the waters of disillusion represented by a "first" London season.

At seven they went ashore, and dined at the hotel. Their table was near a window, looking out over the harbour, and Mrs. Carr could see the motley throng and the glittering lights, and watch the yachts as the lovely pale twilight stole over the sheltering hills, and see the points of light shot out from masthead or bow, and the Chinese lanterns shining like magic fruit among the trees of the villas scattered about the banks and hill slopes.

It was like a fairy scene, save for the noisy bursts of music from the roundabout, the tramp of restless feet, the din of many voices, the oaths of drunken sailors.

The prose of modern life has a happy knack of interfering with its poetry. The beauty of nature is for ever being desecrated by the so-called enjoyment of coarse merry-makers, to whom nothing is lovely or sacred enough to prevent the introduction of beer and skittles, prize fights and betting, oaths and rowdyism.

When dinner was over they visited the show in company with the well-dressed crowd who had landed for the "fun of the

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thing," and were not too blast or too bored to indulge in amusements usually relegated to the lower classes of society.

Mrs. Carr descried Lady Kate and a group of her acquaintances all making for the huge, electric-lighted merry-go-round, and scrambling and snatching at the gaily-painted steeds as if their lives depended on securing one.

"Would you care to join?" asked Captain Talbot. "It really is great fun. The Prince did it, you know!"

"Is it a case of 'the king can do no wrong,' neither can those who follow him?" asked Mrs. Carr laughing. "No, thank you; I draw the line at mounting those apocryphal-looking animals. Would you care to, Joan?"

"Oh, no!" exclaimed the girl. "It looks so-"

"Undignified, eh, Miss O'Rourke? Well, perhaps you are right; but I assure you there is a singular fascination about the thing. Once you get on you are in no hurry to come off. I'm rather surprised not to see any of our friends there. Miss Larking is very fond of the roundabouts. So is Mrs. Johnnie Dennison."

"I daresay," said Joan, quietly. "But I hardly fancy I should care to be flying round in that fashion."

They walked on, and stood for a time to watch the dancers whirling vigorously to the strains of the band, and enjoying the dust and heat and exercise with true British appreciation.

Then the signal rocket went off, and they returned to the river and were rowed to and fro, or idly floated in some quiet corner where the pyrotechnic stream could be seen flying heavenwards on fiery wings, and sending trails of shooting stars aloft to be mirrored in the gleaming water beneath.

Occasionally they passed near the American yacht, and saw the lamps shining in the saloon, or heard voices and laughter from the moving figures on deck. Mrs. Carr looked at the huge vessel with envious eyes. She would have given anything to be there. She thought Lady Kate might have asked her to dinner instead of luncheon. Surely she had carte blanche to invite her own friends.

Every glimpse of the luxury and comfort and wonders of this floating palace, added to her discontent. If she had only gone to Cowes!

Her visions of entertaining her friend all collapsed now. The

tables had been turned on her. The *Phænix* was an insignificant and trumpery affair, and Captain Talbot had no *chef*, only a very ordinary cook indeed, who seemed to have no ideas beyond boiled salmon, and roast fowl.

Yes; decidedly Lady Kate had the best of it, and had been mean to leave her out in the cold. Americans are always glad to meet new people, and after all she and her friend were in the same set.

Her discontent quite spoilt the rest of her evening.

She was almost rude to the captain, and snappish to Joan, and they both looked surprised, and talked to—each other.

This annoyed her still more.

The waltz music from the shore sounded discordant, the fire-works were odious, the voices and laughter had lost all charm. She began to remember her debts, and to think her gown from Redfern positively unbecoming. Lady Kate had been in white serge with gold braid and buttons, and had looked twenty-five at most, and Mrs. Carr knew she was over thirty.

Altogether she was in a bad temper, and almost wished she had not come across that volatile friend of hers, with her endless flirtations, her social successes, and her marvellous gowns.

At eleven o'clock she declared herself tired to death, and longing to be home.

Captain Talbot was sleeping on his yacht, but he took them to their own steps and saw them up to the cottage gate, and bade them good-night with expressed reluctance as to the morrow's change of plans.

"What will Miss O'Rourke do?" he asked, as he lingered for a last hand-shake.

"Stay at home till five. I will come back at five," said Mrs. Carr.

"May I send the launch then?"

"No, no," she said, petulantly. "If I should change my plans it would be tiresome. Don't trouble about us to-morrow, Captain Talbot. I will let you know about the evening."

He said no more but took his leave, wondering a little at the sudden change in Mrs. Carr's manner, a little saddened at the thought of the lonely hours in store for him on the morrow.

And yet—how was it, he wondered—that it was Joan's loneliness and Joan's face that haunted him?

The second day was often the best—the smartest gowns—the gayest parties—the best of the racing—and she would be shut up there in the cottage grounds all by herself. Why had not Mrs. Carr chosen to take her? If she had told Lady Kate—But then he remembered Joan's own words. There was a natural, undeclared antipathy between the two women, and he was not surprised at it. Without being in the least prudish, Joan O'Rourke had the instinctive modesty of all refined and sensitive girlhood—the sort of modesty that is a standing reproach to such women as Lady Kate, and Addie Larking.

The golden August moon was flooding the hills with light—the harbour and river were luminous and glorified into vivid beauty. He stepped into his boat, and rowed slowly back to the yacht.

A strange weariness and dissatisfaction were upon him. The day somehow had been a failure. He lit a cigar and paced the little narrow deck till long after midnight.

He had been used to meditate on such occasions on the charms and graces of Mrs. Carr. To-night he thought only of —Joan.

### CHAPTER XVIII.

### STEERING A COURSE.

MRS. CARR took off her yachting dress and got into a tea-gown, and then came downstairs to iced champagne, and sandwiches, and other delicacies, all laid out on a table close to the window, and lit by a lamp with a crimson shade.

They could catch peeps of the opposite side—of illuminated gardens, and balconies and trellises—could hear the loud bursts of music on the still night air, and the noise of the departing crowd in late trains and ferry boats.

Mrs. Carr was still ill-humoured, and began to speak her mind.

"Why were you so rude to Lady Kate?" she said. "Turning your back on her all the time. Girls of your age shouldn't give themselves airs; it makes them unpopular. Now, you'll have to stay here all by yourself to-morrow, unless you like to take those old maids at their word and go to them. It's not my fault. I'm perpetually telling you that you must put up with

people, and pretend not to see their shortcomings, or else you'll be voted disagreeable and prudish, like those horrid, touch-menot kind of Englishwomen who are supposed to have all the virtues of their own sex because they can't attract the other. There's not many of them left, thank goodness! That sort of style has quite gone out. The most popular women in society are Americans, and there's no reason why the Irish shouldn't run them close, for we've more than their spirits and gaiety, and can talk quite as much, without their vulgarity. Of course, we never are so rich—only the Russians beat them at that. Still——"

She stopped and drank off a glass of champagne. The cool, sparkling liquor refreshed and soothed her; her ill-temper began to evaporate, and she was her old, handsome, chattering self once more.

"We ought soon to hear from Lucius," she said. "He must have reached Aden by now. I wonder how he will like India."
"I wonder?" echoed Joan.

She was gazing out at the quiet, starlit night, and thinking how pleasant the day had been for her. Even her aunt's little outburst could not spoil it, or alter that delicious new sense of being considered—thought of—understood—which of late had been her privilege.

It seemed as if an unseen protection was always about her, that when she spoke she had a ready listener; when she moved or walked someone was conscious of it, and if not by her side, at least desired to be so.

To know all this, to feel the charm of that unexpressed homage, was as yet, only a sweet and subtle wonder; something to dream of and think of in her quiet hours, something that made Nature lovelier, and poetry sweeter, and music sadder and gladder, all in one.

Its birth had been brief. The consciousness of its existence dated only from that hour when she had sang those lovely, mournful words of Moore's, and, looking up, had met the dimmed eyes of Eustace Talbot.

To have made a man, and such a man, feel like that! Her beart had throbbed with triumph, her own eyes grown dim in answering sympathy.

And Time since, counted but by hours as it had been, seemed

a long, vague, blissful dream, unreal, but so sweet that she asked for no awakening.

"Joan!" cried Mrs. Carr, sharply—"Joan! what are you dreaming about? You've been gazing at those stars as if you were a thousand miles away. I don't believe you've heard a word I've been saying."

Joan had not.

"I'm getting tired of this knock-about life," continued Mrs. Carr; "tired even of liberty. It's like everything else. When we haven't got it, nothing in life seems so desirable; when we have, it becomes as wearisome as bondage. A woman has no position or standing unless she has a husband. She is always in mortal terror what Mrs. Grundy will say. I don't care a pin about Mrs. Grundy; but I do want a settled home, and to feel someone is at hand to shelter my pranks, and pay my bills. So I really have made up my mind to marry—a good deal for your sake, too, Joan. You will have a home and proper guardiansnip and though they're all very goody-goody and slow here, still, we can be away half the year; and he seems very well off, and old Sir Lucas is sure to leave him some of his money, and Talbot Manor is really a very beautiful old place to live in, and I shall feel so safe. Yes; I've looked at all sides of the question and I've come to the conclusion that---"

Joan turned and looked at her. Her face had lost all its colour; her eyes had a strange, half-frightened gleam in their lovely depths.

"That I shall marry Captain Talbot," concluded Mrs. Carr, pouring the remainder of the champagne into her glass.

"Marry!" echoed Joan, faintly.

The lights grew hazy. For a moment the stars seemed whirling dizzily around her. She felt confused.

"Yes," said Mrs. Carr decidedly—"marry. I felt it would have to come soon or late. I know he cares for me; and he is a very good man, and, I believe, well off. I must ascertain that exactly before I accept him. That's why I'm cultivating his friends."

Joan flushed hotly.

"Oh! how can you?" she exclaimed. "It sounds so mean, so small—weighing him in the balance against what he possesses!"

"I don't care what it sounds," said Mrs. Carr. "I only know that it's prudent and advisable. Now let us go to bed. I'm dead tired."

Mrs. Carr woke late the next morning, and had her breakfast brought to her by Nolan, and sipped her tea and read her letters in serene content, while the brilliant August sunshine filtered through the lace curtains at her window, and the cool soft air blew in with the salt of the Channel in its breath. She thought of the luncheon-party and the lordly pleasure vessel, and wondered what sort of people they would be, and wished there was a chance of getting an invitation to go coasting about with them.

She rose at last, and dashed a bottle of eau-de-cologne reck-lessly into her bath, and came downstairs at one o'clock fresh and vigorous and handsome as ever. The Redfern gown was, after all, very excellent style. To-day she wore a cream silk blouse with it, which suited her admirably, she told herself, and, as yet, she did not require to "make up," as Lady Kate did. If she had the advantage in the juvenility of her costumes, Mrs. Carr could at least retaliate by the freshness of her skin, and a complexion that feared neither sun nor wind.

Joan was sitting in the verandah with a book. It struck her aunt that she looked pale and listless, and there were dark rings under her eyes that spoke of sleeplessness.

"You're not looking at all well, my darling," she exclaimed. "Have you a headache?"

"Yes," said Joan. "I couldn't sleep, it was so hot."

"Well, keep quiet. There's nothing like lying down in a darkened room, and tell Nolan to bathe your forehead with eau-de-cologne and toilet vinegar mixed; it's excellent. And don't bother about going to those old women. Very likely I shall be back to tea at five; if not, to dinner certain. Then we'll go on the river again. I don't suppose Captain Talbot will come; but if he does, say 'eight o'clock at the steps.'"

She kissed the girl warmly, and hurried off down the steep path to the landing-steps, where her boat was waiting.

As she neared the yacht, she saw a crowd of people moving about under the striped deck awning. One or two men were smoking and leaning over the side watching the craft on the river, and the boats plying to and fro with their gaily-dressed freights.

Mrs. Carr glanced up under the shade of her scarlet parasol. One of the men looked down at the solitary passenger in the boat. He had a handsome face, with clear-cut features, and a loose waving mass of brown hair slightly tinged with grey, thrown back from his brow.

His dark violet eyes gazed straight at Mrs. Carr's uplifted face, and, as they met her own careless glance, he started, and the cigarette fell with a hiss into the blue waters beneath.

"My God! . . . It can't be?" he cried below his breath.

He saw the face below him grow ashy white, and then swiftly turn aside.

The next moment all was bustle and confusion; greetings and introductions. He heard a rich, ringing voice, a soft laugh, and flutter of silk. The perfume of violets seemed to float on the air, and then someone tapped him familiarly on the arm.

"Mr. M'Dermot," said Lady Kate's voice beside him, "let me introduce you to my great friend, Mrs. Carr. I'm sure you're compatriots, though you always deny it."

And then—through a haze of years—he looked back once more, and greeted, as a stranger greets, the woman who was presented to him.

The sudden whitening of her face and quiver of her lip showed emotion held strongly in check. But no one remarked it save the man whose graceful bow had something theatrical and overaccentuated about it.

Neither of them spoke. Lady Kate rattled on in her usual fluent manner, and presently some more people came up, and the American actor, as he was called, drew aside and slipped away from the group of whom the new guest was the centre.

There were some half-dozen American women about her, with the usual characteristics of those who favour our shores. The elder ones wore their grey hair elaborately *coiffured*, and displayed a curious network of wrinkles on their clear skins, were over-dressed, and wore diamonds. The younger had the fragility and grace of hothouse flowers, and were exquisite to look at, and horrible to talk to.

They chattered and laughed, and were as noisy and vulgar and slangy as is their wont, and interlarded their conversation with personalities, and dragged in titles promiscuously, and described the balls at Cowes and Ryde and Torquay in picturesque, if somewhat forcible, language.

Mrs. Carr felt as if a swarm of bees were buzzing about her The summons to luncheon came as an intense relief, and she found herself sitting by the side of the owner of the yacht, a New York millionaire, who looked like a pork butcher in Sunday clothes, and rejoiced in the name of Ephraim Columbus Stoat.

On any other occasion Mrs. Carr would have found endless amusement in the party assembled in that gorgeous saloon, every corner of which spelt "dollars"; in her host's self-complaisant boasts and ceaseless talk of how he had acquired those same dollars, and what a good time he meant to have in Eu—rope. But to-day she was only conscious that he irritated and bored her beyond endurance, that the luncheon was far too elaborate for good style, that the wine was over iced, and the scent of the flowers, and breath of the sea, and odour of food all commingled, made her feel faint and sick.

And all the time she talked for dear life, terrified of a pause. Her eyes flashing here and there, her smiles ever ready, the quick and witty turns of her phrases raising delighted laughter from those in her neighbourhood all the time.

She had been called a good actress often. She knew she had never merited the praise till to-day. To-day, when the folly a score of years had sought to hide, leapt suddenly as sword from scabbard to wound and terrify her hard-won peace. To-day, when a ghost from the long dead and buried past had stepped out from its grave, and looked at her with strange, unsmiling eyes, that once had meant to her all the beauty and delight of life.

Galled and fretted and half heart-broken, she sat on there, and from time to time a furtive glance showed her that handsome head with its soft framework of hair tossed carelessly back, and those wonderful magnetic eyes fastened on Lady Kate's delighted mignonne face.

He never once looked at her.

She would have given worlds to speak his name naturally and easily to the loquacious Ephraim Stoat, but she could not bring herself to do it. It was not the name she had known him by

in that old bygone time. Neither were his profession and fame at all to be associated with the wild young scapegrace who had had to flee from home and country for his very life. And yet she had known him in a moment, even as he had known her. The changes of time had been unable to destroy that subtle interest with which love, or sin, or hate alike can unite two creatures.

Was it one or all of these that had united them in memory, if not in heart, for a score of parted years? That had leapt to fresh life at the first glance of this chance meeting?

Impossible to say. Betty O'Rourke and Terence Creagh had loved too passionately, suffered too terribly in the past for any mere commonplace feeling to control their future. Lovers they could never be again; friends they would not. Enemies—bitter and resentful of past wrong—unforgiving, unforgetful they were at this present moment, keenly alive to the changes in each other, even as they were almost painfully conscious of every look and word and smile that were lavished on the circle around, and from which they excluded their own individuality for the time being.

After luncheon the men went on deck to smoke, or took boats and followed the races, or loitered about the lovely, shady river nooks. Lady Kate insisted on showing Mrs. Carr over the yacht, the drawing-room of which was upholstered in satin brocade, and had so much gilding and so many mirrors that it quite dazzled one's eyes. The state-rooms were lovely nests of luxury, and the ladies' bath-room was all ivory and gold, with a bath of pink marble let into the floor. Mrs. Carr looked and wondered, and exclaimed as she was expected to do, for Mrs. Ephraim Columbus Stoat was for ever at their heels, calling attention to this and that, and vaunting the costliness and extravagance which had only been outrivalled by Vanderbilt himself.

It was to Mrs. Carr the most wearisome of ordeals; to be led hither and thither; to have that irritating nasal twang for ever in her ears, alternating with Lady Kate's frivolous chatter; to hear of dollars poured out like water while she had not wherewithal to pay her bills, and had been living at exactly three times her income for the last two years, and then to be all the time longing to get away for five moments' quiet talk with one person; to be tossed hither and thither on a sea of wild con-

jecture and possibilities. She felt as if she must scream out at those idiots, and bid them hold their peace, and leave her free to go her way.

And yet she kept up, and they saw nothing amiss with her, heard no incoherence in her random speeches, no false note in her laughter. Desperation nerved her. She felt she must go on. The machinery within was wound up to a certain pitch; if it was relaxed it would break down altogether.

It was five o'clock when they went on deck. A rapid glance showed her that M'Dermot was not there. She gave a sigh of relief, and took one of the gaily-cushioned basket-chairs scattered about.

The river was alive with boats plying to and fro. The lines of flags from the different vessels waved in the breeze. A soft grey haze covered the sky. The air had grown cool, and the salt breath of the sea swept in with the inflowing tide.

She sat down and looked at it all with burning eyes and a feverish feeling of danger and unrest.

"Yesterday, how I could have enjoyed it all!" she thought, and felt a tigerish hatred of this fate that was for ever wrecking and torturing human lives, mingled with a wild longing to lay down her head and cry out her misery.

But habit had served her too long to be easily overcome. It served now as a dam to this wild torrent of emotion, and controlled its force.

For another quarter of an hour she sat there and chattered on of a thousand airy nothings. Then she rose, and asked that a boat might be summoned and resolutely declining all invitations to stay on for tea, she descended the side of the beautiful vessel, and was rowed back to her own landing-place.

When she was out of sight of the yacht she put up her scarlet sunshade to hide her face, and leant back on the seat with a sort of groan.

The man rowed steadily on, and the current kept them near the bank, where the trees hung over the water, making a beautiful shade in these warm summer days.

Suddenly a little skiff shot forward from under the drooping boughs, and in a moment was beside her own boat.

The occupant looked at the pale face under the scarlet framework of the open sunshade, and spoke low and eagerly.

"I saw you remembered me. I could not speak to you—there. Will you see me for a few moments? Where do you land?"

His voice seemed to act on her like a spell. Her own grew cold and hard, and her eyes met the entreaty of his face with sudden scorn.

"I hardly know what you can have to say to me," she said. "We have been strangers long enough to forget we were ever anything else. Still—I land at these steps where you see a road winding up the hill."

He bowed, and let her boat pass on, and followed a short distance behind.

She gave the man a tip, and got out and stood on the little landing-stage, waiting. Her heart beat stormily; the blood flushed and paled in her cheek. Life had suddenly grown into the vivid, palpitating thing she had once known; stirred to the music of sensations—sweet with joy, or fierce with pain as the passion of the moment held sway.

The little skiff floated in beside the steps. Its occupant fastened the rope to one of the posts, and lightly leaped to land. She moved on, and he walked by her side up the steep and shady road which led to the cottage.

## CHAPTER XIX.

#### A PAGE FROM THE PAST.

"So you are married?" he said, breaking the uncomfortable silence which she maintained.

"And you," she said, "have changed your name and nationality."

"And we remembered each other at once," he went on.
"After how many years, Betty?"

"There is no need to be too accurate," she said. "Let us say —twenty."

"It is almost that," he said softly. "What a young vagabond I was. And oh! what a good time we had. I suppose you have forgotten all that. Tell me, have you married well? You were always ambitious. I found you in excellent company, if I'm to take Lady Kate Golightly for your sponsor."

"I have all I want," she said indifferently, "and I may as well tell you I am a widow. Mr. Carr died ten years ago."

"A widow!" He looked startled, and his eyes turned to her handsome face and beautifully-gowned figure. "Ah!" he said, and his eyes clouded, "I haven't had your luck. I am not a—widower."

"You are married also?" she exclaimed quickly.

"Years ago. Why not? I'd been kicked out of home and left me nothing behind but a bad reputation. Even you, Bet, hadn't a good word for me in those days. Sakes! how we used to quarrel, you and I; and how desperately I loved you. You've never had a rival worth mentioning yet."

She was silent. Her thoughts had travelled far back to days for ever darkened by regret—for ever a living nightmare in her sleepless hours.

"What a splendid-looking woman you are now?" he went on. "Rather different from the wild slip of a girl who was all smiles and tears, kisses and storms, uncertain as her native skies and——"

"Oh, hush!" she cried sharply. "For God's sake let all that folly be forgotten! Heaven knows I paid a heavy price for it—a price that you never guessed."

Something in her voice, her face, struck him sharply. He stopped and looked at her.

"You sent me from you," he said. "You told me you didn't mind if I wrote, or not. Do you mean that all the time you—you cared?"

She stood there motionless, idly tracing lines in the dust at her feet with the point of her closed sunshade. Yet a fearful storm was going on within her heart—pride and memory were in self-conflict, and something, too, that had all the passion and humiliation of shame, and for years had been stifled by the voice of expediency; a voice often more persuasive than that of nature.

"I—I don't know what I mean," she said bitterly. "Only that I had hoped you might remember—you might write——"

"I did write," he said quickly—"the moment I got to New York; I addressed it under cover to your brother; and then again from San Francisco a year later; but you never took any notice."

"I never had any letter," she said, "and I—dared not write on chance to the Poste Restante, and oh, Terence, if you only knew what that year meant for me——"

The natural woman spoke out then. The natural woman looked at him from the tearful shadows of her eyes.

He was moved and touched to his heart's core—moved as he had never thought to be again, and for one fleeting moment the years of division seemed as nothing, and his one impulse was to draw her to his heart and comfort her as he had comforted the wild, wayward girl who had been his first love, and was now his last.

But he restrained himself, and only looked sadly at her, and wondered if this was the brilliant, witty woman who had been the cynosure of all eyes at the luncheon table a brief while before.

He knew something of the infinite capacities of women. He had come from a land where their society was a liberal education, and yet as he watched her and guessed at the struggle within her breast he felt that she went even beyond his experience, and that his art had sustained a loss in her resistance to its call.

She rallied all her powers and turned to him again.

"Let us walk on," she said. "I am staying here. We shall soon reach the house. Would you care——?"

She stopped abruptly. The blood rushed to her face. "I cannot ask you in," she went on. "I—I have friends there, and——"

Her embarrassment surprised him.

"There is no need for excuses," he said bitterly. "I can tell when I am not wanted, but it is a somewhat novel experience. Perhaps, however, we had better not attempt to bridge over these years of separation. The follies and mistakes of youth are not pleasant to look back upon. As for you, society and fashion claim you for their own, and art is my task-master. There cannot be much between us in the future, only I felt I must speak to you—see you—if only once."

He saw the colour come and go in her face. Yet still he was far from guessing the real nature of the conflict waged with pride and self. The nature of a secret held closely to her heart for nearly a score of years. A secret she had vowed never to

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tell to any living soul, and a secret which she knew now he had never suspected, and had a right equal with herself to share.

He watched her changing expression, and thought once more what a beautiful woman she was, and how different life might have been, if only——

The sound of voices coming towards them broke the train of thought. Mrs. Carr started, and the colour swept to her face in a burning flood.

"Good bye!" she said. "I must go."

"Will you not see me again?" he entreated. "I had so much to say, and I have said nothing of it. Let me write—don't let us part like this."

"Very well," she said hurriedly, "you can write—if you wish. My address is St. Petrox Cottage."

"Good-bye, then—Betty."

She gave him one glance, and turned rapidly away. He stood watching her retreating figure, and saw coming towards her a young girl in a white gown and sailor hat; a man was walking by her side.

They stopped to speak, and all turned back together.

Terence Creagh, or, as he was always called, Terence M'Dermot, watched them out of sight. Then he turned and went slowly back to his skiff.

"I wonder if that was her daughter?" he thought. "I never asked if she had any family . . . . A widow for ten years, just as long as I've been married—curse my folly! Why couldn't I have waited a little longer? why didn't I try to find out what had become of her? . . . I wonder if 'that fast little monkey, Lady Kate, could tell me anything about her? She's generally inclined to be confidential these moonlight evenings—only, hang it! a woman's confidences in the moonlight are always about herself!"

He got into his little boat once more, and rowed back to the yacht.

Meanwhile, Joan and Captain Talbot were telling Mrs. Carrinow they were going down to the landing place-to see if she had arrived, when they met her. She listened somewhat absently.

"It has been such a tiring day," she said, "and I have a headache. No, I wouldn't wait tea. I preferred to come back.

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Why are Americans always so noisy and restless? They are the most fatiguing people on the face of the earth, I think!"

"Was that an American with you?" asked Joan. "I caught a glimpse of long hair, and a soft felt hat. It was picturesque but decidedly un-English."

"I hate that word!" said Mrs. Carr, sharply. "Why is everything English to be considered the standard of taste? Any grace of manner, originality of costume, any wit, or genius, or romance of nature, is—un-English! Any man who doesn't crop his hair like a jockey or a convict is un-English, just as much as one who isn't perpetually thinking of what he can kill—or catch."

"That is severe—but true," said Captain Talbot, smiling. "And from it all, are we to conclude that your new friend hailed from the land of stars and stripes?"

"Yes," she said, somewhat embarrassed. "He is the actor, Terence M'Dermot, that Lady Kate was speaking about yesterday."

"Oh! cried Joan, rapturously. "How I should love to have seen him. Why did you not ask him up to the cottage?"

"I remembered your headache," said Mrs. Carr, dryly. "And also that I have endured four hours of American slang and American voices."

"Is he so very American?" asked Joan. "What a pity! I have often read about his acting. They say he is wonderful. He is almost as good in tragedy as in comedy. Is he going to stay here long? Will he act at all in England?"

"I never asked him," said Mrs. Carr, abruptly, "I am not interested in his profession—or his engagements."

Joan looked at her in surprise. She seemed so ill-humoured and petulant. The path was narrow here, and she fell behind, and did not again join them until they had reached the gate. Captain Talbot left them there, declining tea, as he was going over to his yacht.

"But you will come out after dinner, won't you?" he asked.

"Oh, yes—I will come," agreed Mrs. Carr, somewhat languidly. "A cup of tea and a rest will soon put me to rights. As for Joan—" She stopped and looked at the girl. "Is your headache gone? You were quite ill when I left this morning."

"Oh, it is much better; I took your advice and am all right again."

Mrs. Carr nodded to the captain as he stood with his hand on the wooden gate.

"Very well, we will come," she said; "expect us between eight and nine."

He raised his straw hat and closed the gate, and went with his usual firm, quick step (quarter-deck, as Mrs. Carr called it), down the hill path once again.

"Tell Nolan to bring me some tea to my room," said Mrs. Carr, as they crossed the lawn and went in to the cottage, "and for heaven's sake let no one disturb or come near me till I come downstairs. I want no dinner. Take your own, and be dressed by eight o'clock."

Her voice was so sharp, her manner so strange, that Joan felt again that sense of bewildered pain which, of late, had been aroused by this alteration. She was quite unconscious of any wrong-doing on her part that could have caused it, and yet she shrank from asking its reason.

"I am sorry you are not well," she said gently, "and if you are not going to dine I would rather follow your example. I had my luncheon late, and tea is all I care about. If your head aches, shall I bathe it? That lotion was excellent."

"Oh, don't bother about me," said Mrs. Carr, irritably. "I only want rest and a little peace. I shall be all right by eight o'clock. By-the-bye," she turned suddenly as she reached the door, "how came Captain Talbot to be walking with you? Had he called here? He knew I was away."

"I met him at the gate, as I was going out," said Joan. "I did not like to ask him in. I said I was going down to meet you, and he came also."

Mrs. Carr said nothing, and left the room.

Joan rang the bell and gave the necessary orders about tea, and then sat out in her favourite verandah to wait for its arrival. Her heart felt strangely heavy. There was the smart of unshed tears in her eyes as she gazed at the beautiful scene, and thought how lonely she was and how friendless. A motherless, sisterless girl, who had no place in life, and no special niche that needed her. She had come here so happy, so free-hearted. She had thought to enjoy it all so much, and

yet suddenly everything seemed to go wrong. Mrs. Carr had changed; the captain—

She did not follow that thought. A sense of loss and pain came with it that surprised and hurt her. She leaned back with her arms clasped behind her head, and watched the white clouds come and go in the blue sky. What a mystery was life, and how unsatisfactory and unsatisfying!

The only way to be happy seemed to have no wishes which could not be satisfied; to simplify that, it was best to have no wishes at all. To empty one's heart of all those vague dreams, hopes, ambitions which meant only unrest, and take the common routine of everyday life for what it was worth.

She sighed heavily. For philosophy is only acceptable when we have exhausted our emotional faculties; when grey skies seem as fair as blue and far more restful to the eye; and of all things good and desirable we only ask one—to be left in peace.

#### CHAPTER XX.

"WE DARE TO COPE WITH THE WHOLE TRUTH."

THE diary of memory holds many records that only our own hearts have written and only our own eyes have read.

Mrs. Carr was looking back at such a diary as she lay in her darkened room and remembered the meeting with Terence M'Dermot that morning.

"After all these years!" she cried to herself; "after all these years! Who would have thought it? What a catastrophe! What a bungler Fate is! Now—when it can be of no possible use or service, when only mischief and disaster can possibly arise out of it—to be thrown together again! And once, when it might have saved me—made a different woman of me—and I broke my heart in prayers and tears for sight of him, he never came. What was that he said about letters? Could Lucius have deceived me after all? There was no love lost between them, and yet, when so much was at stake—"

She tossed impatiently on the pillows. Her head really ached. She felt stifled and feverish and ill. The tea did her no good, and the cool lotion seemed only to make her head worse.

After sailing so smoothly along—after enjoying life and its good things, and never letting herself think of anything trouble-some or disagreeable when it could be possibly avoided, it did seem hard to be suddenly brought face to face with a dark frowning wall of circumstance, which she could neither scale nor evade.

It was horrible. It was detestable. No wonder her head ached and her brain throbbed, and all calm and rational thought was impossible. And in two hours she must dress and go down to the yacht, and meet scores of people, and see and be seen, and chatter and laugh. Oh, how sick she felt of it all. What a hateful reputation was that of the jester! and what harder to keep up? Others might sulk and be silent or stupid or dull, but not she—not the "brilliant Irishwoman," as everyone called

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her, whose tongue was for ever to rattle, whose jests were for ever to amuse, whose laugh was never to fail.

She pitied herself so that she cried, and that made her head worse and her eyes burn, and drew lines about the lids and altogether ruined her appearance. She felt it would be quite impossible to show herself that evening, and then she resolved she would do it and defy Fate. She had never shown the "white feather" yet; she would not begin now.

All the polished falsities of these last five years helped to restore her composure. She braced up her exhausted energies. She bathed her head and eyes, and then lay perfectly still, and would not let herself think—for half an hour.

By that time she had ceased to grovel in inert hopelessness, and almost made herself believe that there would be a way found to climb the wall and escape the danger that threatened.

The little hired carriage came round at eight o'clock and found Joan and Mrs. Carr ready.

The hill path was only a short cut they sometimes used. When Mrs. Carr had a toilette to think of, and shoes that suffered from the powdering of Devon's red or grey dust, she always drove by the longer but less dress-destructive route.

She looked paler than usual and was strangely quiet; otherwise she seemed as handsome and as perfectly dressed, and as free from care as ever Joan had known her.

The girl had too much tact to revert to the subject of the American yacht. It was evident the visit had not been as agreeable as its expectation. They drove in almost total silence along the dusty road. The sky was clear. A few stars were already shining in its blue depths. The cool breeze was delightful after the heat of the day, and every turn of the road gave lovely glimpses of the harbour and the opposite shore, and the lights twinkling already from the hundreds of pleasure craft that rode at anchor. There was quite a large party on Captain Talbot's yacht when they reached it. The two sets of Dennisons, Addie Larking and Dr. Rawling, with whom she was flirting desperately; Sir Lucas, who had come without his wife. and welcomed Mrs. Carr almost too warmly for prudence, and one or two naval men who were friends of the captain, and who surveyed the two new arrivals with undisguised approval.

The scene in the harbour and up the river was very gay and animated, and above all the full, bright moon shone once more in unclouded splendour.

The town was less crowded than on the previous evening, but the whirling roundabout kept up its unabated attraction, and the dancers still whirled to the loud music of the band.

\* \* \* \* \* \* \*

Scores of boats were plying to and fro, taking or bringing back people from the various yachts. It surprised Mrs. Carr a little, when suddenly a voice from one hailed their own little vessel.

"It is your friend, Lady Kate, I think," said Captain Talbot, going forward.

"Lady Kate!" echoed Mrs. Carr, and sprang from her seat impulsively, and crossed to the side of the yacht, where the steps were let down.

A boat lay idly rocking on the tide, and her friend's familiar voice called to know if she were on board.

"I've come to say good-bye," she went on in answer to Mrs. Carr's affirmative. "We're off to-morrow to Plymouth. So sorry. Yes, I'll come up for a minute. M'Dermot rowed me over. He's here too. He says he can't leave the boat."

"Oh, throw up a rope and we'll fasten it," said Captain Talbot. "It will be quite safe. Pray ask your friend to come up also."

Joan had come forward now, and was bending eagerly over the side. The lights from the yacht showed her the handsome, leonine head of the actor as he sat in the little skiff. He fastened it as Captain Talbot directed, and in another moment was standing on deck, and being introduced by Lady Kate's shrill and high-pitched voice as "Mr. Terence M'Dermot, from New York, you know"—as if that explained everything. Then she seized on Mrs. Carr.

"I'm so sorry I have to leave," she said, "but you see I couldn't ask the Stoats to put off their departure. It was all arranged quite suddenly. You're going to stay on, I suppose? Why don't you do a bit of coasting? It's awful fun, and you can always make for land when it's squally. I'm getting quite a famous sailor."

Lady Kate had a large fund of vivacity, and a method of accommodating herself to all circumstances. She always talked

a great deal, and it was generally nonsense; but then few people listen to anything serious, and the adjective "charming" is very comprehensive. To-night she was particularly lively, for she had carried M'Dermot off in the face of a dozen American claimants, and had him all to herself for as long as she chose to keep him.

She related her escapade to Mrs. Carr.

"And he's such a *dear*," she went on rapturously; "and so safe, you know. Never forgets his position and all that. Quite the nicest man to flirt with I've ever come across. What a rum set of women you've got here. Who's that girl with the gilt hair and green eyes, and brick-dust complexion?"

"Addie Larking," said Mrs. Carr, her own eyes intently watching Terence M'Dermot, who was standing talking to Captain Talbot.

"Oh! and where's the wonderful Mrs. Johnnie you told me about? Is she here too?"

Mrs. Carr murmured "Hush!" judiciously, and suggested that voices carried further on the water than on land, while indicating Mrs. Johnnie, who wore a crépon skirt and a white satin blouse, and an elaborately trimmed hat, in which hydrangea and carnations and violets and green ribbon all grew together in the common garden ground of white straw.

"Is that her idea of a yachting costume?" laughed Lady Kate, who was herself a picture in cream serge and the nattiest of sailor hats. "Pity she doesn't get someone to dress her. Ah! I see she's got her eye on M'Dermot. The women always spot him directly. Isn't he adorably handsome?"

"He's good-looking, certainly," allowed Mrs. Carr. "But I don't like that theatrical style."

"Gracious! you wouldn't have him crop his hair, and wear a frock coat and a bowler, and all the other hideous abominations of men's modern dress. You have no idea of the picturesque. It's just that uncommon style that I fell in love with. Our society men are just like patterns cut out of Doré's fashion books—one a duplicate of the other, making allowance for height, or colour of hair, and even that you can hardly see now, the way it's cropped. So idiotic—but then fashion always is that, more or less. I'm going to invent a style of my own next season; M'Dermot's helping me in the designs; not day gowns, you

know, only evening dresses, and things for the Academy, and all that. It will be so uncommon."

"After all, it's a great thing to be uncommon nowadays," said Mrs. Carr. "We've lost all power of individuality. That went out with the domestic virtues, I suppose, and short-waisted frocks, and ringlets. How would you or I look in ringlets, my dear?"

"I hear they're coming in in France," said Lady Kate. "Dear little frizzy things hanging in bunches each side of one's face. Only then we'd have to cultivate our partings again, and fringes have ruined that. What's the matter with you? You quite jumped."

Mrs. Carr had seen Captain Talbot introducing Joan to Terence M'Dermot.

She rose hastily.

"It's rather chilly sitting here," she said. "Let us walk about."

"Very well," said Lady Kate. "Do introduce me to the giltedged young person. She looks as if there might be some fun in her. I don't care for Mrs. Juno, and a Greek knot doesn't become her, and that hat looks as if it had come out of the Edgware Road."

Mrs. Carr was only too thankful to get rid of her dear friend for a few moments. The pain in her head had again commenced, and every nerve was quivering with mingled dread and expectation.

Joan and Terence M'Dermot were pacing the deck together. She longed to hear what they were saying.

Meanwhile Lady Kate and the "gilt-edged young person" had plunged into the vapid brilliance of conversational seas, and were splashing vigorously in and out of their depth.

Addie was abusing country society, and trying to make her last visit to London do duty for a wide experience of fashionable life.

"One's whole soul expands in the atmosphere of London," she announced grandiloquently. "Here month follows month, and you see the same faces, and go to the same stupid entertainments, and hear the same silly babble about babies and servants and the parish. The old women sit with their feet on footstools and tell each other their ailments. and the young ones quarrel

over the curates on one side of the river, and the officers on the other. And we get to know each other's gowns by heart, and the change of a bow or flower in a bonnet makes conversation for a whole Sunday afternoon. Oh! its just hateful. I'm stagnating slowly for sheer want of society worth the name."

"But don't you do anything?" questioned Lady Kate. "Play, sing, get up theatricals or bazaars or dances. If I were ever in such a dull place, I'd make them rouse up."

"It's no use piping when no one will dance," answered Addie, discontentedly. "Mrs. Dennison and I-the young Mrs. Dennison, you know, that handsome, fair woman over there-well, we try our best to make things lively. We got up a band-guitars and mandolines and banjos, you know-but the women are all so fearfully jealous and won't come to the practices, and everyone wants a different selection of music, and at our last performance we nearly came to blows, because Mrs. Johnnie would have white and mauve costumes, and she and I were the only fair women. One little horror, who is the wife of a lawyer in the town, and gives herself great airs because she's German or Swiss or something foreign, well, she threw the whole thing up, and wouldn't play, though she had been put down for a solo—a real Swiss song with a lot of tra-la-la's and jodelling which she does awfully well. Fortunately, we got some one from Exeter, whom we knew, in place of her, and who had no objection to mauve, or green, or anything as long as she had an audience to listen to her."

"Ah!" said Lady Kate, "it's one of our popular insular beliefs that artists should be seen, and not heard. Perhaps Mrs. Red Tape—I beg your pardon, you didn't mention her name—was right in objecting to an unbecoming gown. It would have been even more severely criticised than her jodelling. However," she went on briskly, "you have a new element amongst you all now; my friend Mrs. Carr—sounds rather like that thing in Pick-Me-Up, doesn't it?"—and she laughed—"with the lady in the yellow dress and the Israelite being introduced to her. But she's great fun and capital company."

"Yes, I'm sure of that," said Addie, somewhat reluctantly. "But then she's only a visitor. They don't count with us."

She said *Us* as if she were "pure county," and had a position royalty itself might not achieve.

"She may not be a visitor always," said Lady Kate, meaningly. Addie looked at her with sharp eyes of suspicion.

"Oh! you think she may make a conquest? But poor, foolish, old Sir Lucas has a wife, you know, and the rector is only separated from his on account of her ill-health—and—really there's no one else here who has shown her any attention worth speaking of."

Lady Kate took rapid measure of the fair Addie's reasons for this speech, and summed her up as jealous.

"Perhaps she has an eye on the captain," she thought; "not that Betty need fear her rivalry. How shallow these people are, and how narrow-minded!"

For it is a curious fact that even as our faces look to ourselves in a looking-glass quite different from what our friends *know* them to be, so do our own faults and vanities appear quite different when reflected from the mirror of another person's character.

Lady Kate did not wish to draw Addie Larking's suspicions towards the Counsellor, as she had named him, so she turned off the conversation into another channel, and suggested that guitars and banjos always sounded so well on the water. Wouldn't she and Mrs. Johnnie favour them with a song?

It appeared that the instruments were there, but had not been used as yet, owing to the noise of the steam roundabout. However, the wind had changed slightly and no longer carried the deafening uproar over the harbour.

A few more lanterns were hung out on the masts, and in the circle of lights the chairs were drawn up and the banjos brought out.

But no one would begin. Excuses were so numerous that Lady Kate lost all patience and, seizing a banjo herself, volunteered a nigger song.

Addie professed herself enraptured, and Mrs. Johnnie watched, with envious eyes, an ease and audacity that she felt she could never achieve.

### CHAPTER XXI.

# " IN HOPELESS SIGHT OF HOPE."

MRS. CARR had withdrawn herself as far as possible from the circle of lights, and sound of voices.

Lady Kate having sang "Someone in the House with Dinah" in as perfect a plantation fashion as a Christy minstrel himself, was surrounded and besieged for another song, and was strumming the opening bars of "The Little Alabama Coon." She was the centre of attraction and perfectly happy.

Here, she was a new sensation. The Americans had heard her songs and listened to her chatter long enough to be ready for another novelty—even an untitled one. Lady Kate had a way of "getting on one's brain-pan," so one of her own special friends had declared, and making one feel, after a while, that her voice was too shrill, and her laugh too metallic, and her movements too restless.

There was something very unreal about her. One felt she was always acting, though the acting was so life-like that it often deceived herself.

As Mrs. Carr sat apart from the group gathered round her chair, with the lights from the Japanese lanterns falling on their faces, she felt rather than saw the approach of a figure which had noiselessly detached itself from the circle where the "little coon" was wailing its woes after the picturesque "swatting" it had received from Lady Kate's fair hands.

"I did not expect we should meet again so soon," said the voice of Terence M'Dermot. "I have been talking to your niece. How charming she is. Do you know she reminds me very much of yourself when you were her age? How old is she?"

"Eighteen," said Mrs Carr, vaguely, her eyes on the sea, which seemed suddenly to heave and swell before her in a strange, giddy fashion.

"Her mother is dead, she told me, and her father in India.

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Poor girl! she doesn't look very happy. She is very beautiful; but I should have thought she was more than eighteen."

Mrs. Carr felt as if her nerves would give way if this sort of thing went on. She was more startled and agitated than she had any need to be, considering that these remarks were the natural outcome of the introduction she had witnessed.

The chorus had taken up the lullaby of the "Alabama Coon," and under cover of its noise her silence was not remarkable.

"So you have no child of your own," he went on, softly. "Do you know, I am glad of that? I was half afraid to ask. When you left me this afternoon, and I saw that girl join you, I thought she was your daughter. It's odd, isn't it, that neither of us should have any children?"

"You too," she gasped in a hoarse, uneven voice.

"Yes, I am also childless. I am not a happy man, Betty. I don't mind confessing that to you. The biggest mistake I ever made was to marry a woman in my own profession. Our lives are nearly always apart, thank goodness! or—well, I couldn't answer for myself. She is that shame and curse of womanhood—a secret drunkard. There's no hope for her, and no cure."

He was leaning his arms on the side of the yacht, and only his profile was turned towards her. As she looked at him, she felt as if the ice of years was suddenly melted from about her heart, and a rush of passionate impulses swept through its long-closed channels.

"Terence!" she cried wildly, and then, shaking and white, rose unsteadily from the deck chair and grasped his arm.

He turned to her swiftly. He could not see her face, but he felt that she was trembling.

"What is it?" he exclaimed.

She leant heavily against the yacht's side. Her breath came in quick pants. A rush of tears made all before her hazy and dim. The voices ceased—a murmur, and then a peal of light laughter fell across the momentary silence. She drew her hand away.

"It was nothing," she said—"nothing. Only I felt sorry."

He touched her hand as it lay white and bare on the dark wood.

"Betty," he said hurriedly. "Oh, Betty, for sake of the past—"

She drew her hand away as if that touch stung her.

"Don't!" she cried in a fierce whisper. "Don't ever speak of that to me! It is dead, buried, forgotten long ago!"

"Not forgotten, Betty. Men's memories are more faithful than women's. I was a bad lot, I know, but I loved you well, and I have never loved any woman since."

"And yet you married?"

"I drifted into it. Heaven knows how often I've cursed that folly—how often I've longed for freedom. But never have I so longed for it as since—"

The gay challenge of a woman's voice rang out across the deck.

"M'Dermot! Here-I want you."

He turned abruptly away, muttering something strong and uncomplimentary.

"You must recite something for us!" went on Lady Kate, loudly.

"I'm d—d if I will," he said below his breath, as he moodily crossed the intervening space.

But he was at once surrounded by the group, and entreaties poured down upon him. Helexcused himself with an abruptness that was almost rude, and then caught sight of Joan's soft eyes clouded with disappointment. Half hesitating he looked at her.

"Do you care for recitations, Miss O'Rourke?" he asked abruptly; and as sharp, jealous glances followed his, the unpopularity of Joan reached its height.

"I should like to hear one from you," said the girl, simply.

He stepped forward and parted the pressing crowd around him, then tossing aside his hat, he folded his arms and commenced Swinburne's "Triumph of Time."

It was a rare treat to hear the great actor recite. He rarely did it in public.

Joan listened in a rapture that spoke out of every line and changeful expression of her beautiful face. Mrs. Carr had stayed on the outer circle of the listeners, and as the rich, melodious voice rose and fell in exquisite varieties of intonation, the long-checked tears rolled freely down her cheeks.

The words thrilled to her heart's core.

Had he any meaning in them for one alone in that listening circle? Was it for her that sad plaint—"Oh! love, my love,

had you loved but me?" or the regret that lived in the lines that followed, every one of which found echo in her soul to-night.

"Grief collapse as a thing disproved, Death consume as a thing unclean, Twain halves of a perfect heart made fast; Soul to soul while the years fell past. Had you loved me once as you have not loved, Had the chance been with us that has not been ! . \* \* Would I lose you now? would I take you then? If I lose you now that my heart has need; And come what may after death to men, What thing worth this will the dead years breed. Lose life, lose all: but at least, I know, O sweet life's love, having lov'd you so, Had I reached you on earth, I should lose not again; In death, nor life, nor in dream or dread."

To most of the listeners that poem with its magnificent phrases and impious, despairing passion, was but as pearls to swine, as caviare to the city clerk, as Chateau Lafitte to the beer-swilling British labourer. They understood nothing of its meaning, but they liked to watch the reciter's face; the glowing eyes, the changeful expressions that gave force to the passionate regrets, to listen to the sonorous music that could thrill even unemotional hearts, to drink in the melody of passion and despair that swept over them in the infinite pathos of that matchless voice.

When he ceased there was a momentary hush. Lady Kate, who had heard him too often to be moved, and who indeed was quite incapable of displaying anything so unfashionable as feeling, gave the signal for applause by clapping her hands. Mrs. Johnnie, who was as emotionless as a statue—and almost as hard—followed suit languidly.

She had never read a line of poetry in her life, and could not understand its use or necessity at all in literature. But even she had felt a coldly sensual gratification in watching the hand-some face, and listening to the beautiful voice.

Then the group broke up, and Lady Kate went off to her own quarters, and there was no opportunity for further word between Mrs. Carr and Terence M'Dermot.

She stood and watched the little boat as it swept away over the rippling water, and her heart seemed to follow it on wings of pain, and vain, vain longing. With every stroke of the oar he was going further and further out of her life. She had lost all right and power to claim him. She could not even be to him what that chattering little flirt beside him could be, a compagnon de voyage, a something to amuse and attract and claim his attention as they floated over quiet seas, and under moonlit skies. Their lives were for ever dissevered and—she had kept her secret.

Why had she not been frank? Why had she not told him? Why had she feared to trust him as once she had trusted; once—when the blind, headlong, resistless force of passion had left her stranded and helpless at his mercy, even as now it held her fettered to his memory.

It seemed suddenly as if all the shams and subterfuges of her life had fallen from her, and left her naked and shivering before her own dismayed sight; as if at last she knew herself—not the self she had presented to the world, not the self that craved for ease and luxury and the goods of this world, but a self new risen from the ashes of selfishness, and longing with vain and wild desire for the warmth of human love and human sympathy.

A sudden disgust shook her whole moral nature, as a rough blast shakes a tree long sheltered from its power.

"It is this life that has ruined me," she cried to herself, "this feverish, intriguing, hateful life, that destroys health of body and purity of mind alike. It is horrible to think of these wasted years. Horrible! He at least has worked—achieved—won fame and honour. And in it all he has remembered me . . . while I——"

She dared not follow that train of thought. She could not trust herself in this new emotional weakness that had suddenly taken possession of her.

She only knew she felt weak and unstrung, remorseful and regretful all in one. She only knew that she wished she had had the courage to tell him that unsuspected secret. To claim him by a tie, if not a memory; to throw at least a portion of the burden she had so long borne alone on his shoulders; had said to him, "Shall we have courage? Shall the truth be told—at last?"

And yet what shipwreck, what downfall it would mean; and he was no longer free. He could not help, even if he shared this trouble. Then—over the fever and misery of her thoughts rang out the tones of the noisy group, twanging their banjos, and chirping foolish verses of foolish songs beyond.

Like a spur to the jaded horse came the thought of how they would triumph, how they would laugh, how cruel would be the sneer and sarcasm of envious tongues.

If a man's worst foes are those of his own household, assuredly those of a woman are her own sex.

Many a noble action, a good deed, a great ideal, a wise resolve has been nipped in the bud by fear of a woman's ironic laughter, or cruel jest, or hateful sneer.

Mrs. Carr turned back now, high-strung with new, unnatural strength, and caught the glitter of Addie Larking's gilt hair, and heard the cold, measured accents of Mrs. Johnnie's metallic voice.

Then all the hard-won courage oozed out as it were at her finger tips. She had come here to conquer. How could she stay to be abased?

A shiver passed over her, and the hard look came to her face that of late had made Joan wonder.

"I won't go back now," she cried in the bitterness of her own heart. "I couldn't let myself down before those women. No —I won't!"

(To be continued.)

# Lord Leighton: a Sketch.

IT is a curious coincidence, and a very sad one, that two men eminent in Art should have "shuffled off this mortal coil" at almost the same moment. Only a day or two elapsed between the death of Lord Leighton, President of the Royal Academy, and Sir Joseph Barnby, Principal of the Guildhall School of Music. Both were representative men of their time, and will leave, in their respective professions, blanks difficult to fill. Lord Leighton, however, held in pictorial Art a higher position than his friend Sir Joseph did in Music. And if the tragedy of death can be intensified by time and circumstance, we cannot but feel the pathos of his having been called away just as he touched the crown of victory. Only this year was he singled out for the high honour conferred by our Queen, who is ever ready to recognize merit and to hold out helpful and encouraging hands to those who endeavour to express in highest and purest form, those longings and aspirations, inarticulate yet imperative, which prove the existence of the divine in man. To get at the root of things, the soul, to see beyond the limitations of life, this is given to the artist, whether poet, painter, or musician.

Ruskin says: "All the great arts have for their object either the support or exaltation of human life, usually both. They are founded first in mastery by strength of arm of the earth or sea, in agriculture and seamanship; then their inventive power in clay and wood. On these two first arts follow, building in stone, sculpture, metal work, painting, every art being properly called *fine* which demands the exercise of the full faculties of heart and intellect." He also says: "Accurately in proportion to the rightness of the cause and the purity of the emotion is the possibility of the fine art."

So the responsibility of the artist is great, and his mission a high one; he must purify his heart, and still and control his emotions, till he is indeed blessed with the clear vision, the lovely wide-eyed wonder and reverence for all that is lovely, pure, and of good report. That is the heritage of the children of the Most High. As Ruskin says in his "Our fathers have

told us," "The kingdom of God is already come to those who have learned to cherish what is lovely and human in the wandering children of the clouds and fields." And though of the artist beyond all other men, it is true that knowledge by suffering entereth, yet he will live through, and see beyond the pain, and helplessness, and misery of life; gaining day by day cunning of hand, and sympathetic insight into all that is sad, tragic, and also beautiful and noble; till through the very agony that wrings his heart, he is able to calm the sorrow of others, to lay a cool, soft hand on aching brows, and often to rescue some poor soul from the black night of sin and despair, by the echo of the divine music and poetry that fill his own heart, and find expression in the master's touch.

Lord Leighton was a man who lived to help others, especially his brother artists. Young, aspiring genius, he helped in the most practical way, by purchasing their works, paintings, sculpture, carving; he had quite a miscellaneous collection, and was most catholic in his tastes—a genial, happy-tempered man, a man who thoroughly lived his life, was indeed full of the joy of life, of its possibilities, conscious no doubt of its limitations, yet ever pressing onward. It has been said he will live as a sculptor and a book illustrator. For some time he contributed to the "Cornhill Magazine," and certainly his illustrations of "Romola" are beautiful in the extreme. We can almost fancy ourselves in the lovely old city, with its domes, and towers, and gardens. Between the magic of the book, and the beauty of the illustrations, we are transported and dream ourselves away out of our own dear foggy, misty, sun-deserted land, where we take our pleasures so sadly, yet so resolutely, into sweet, sunny, picturesque Florence, city of painters and of all things fair to look upon. Leighton was also one of a notable group of artists who contributed drawings to illustrate Dalziel's "Bible Gallery," some of whom were, Ford Madox Brown, Holman Hunt, Watts, Houghton, and Burne Jones. Leighton contributed nine drawings to the book, and all gave of their best work, Lord Leighton's being some of the finest designs. These can I believe be seen now at the South Kensington Museum, and are very well worth inspection.

Lord Leighton was born at Scarborough, December 3rd, 1830. He was of Yorkshire descent. His grandfather, Sir James

Leighton, knight, was physician to the Royal family of Russia, and privy councillor to the Emperor. His father, Frederick Leighton, was also a physician. From early childhood the boy showed a passion for Art; but his father was much opposed to allowing him to adopt it as a career, though giving him every encouragement to cultivate his talent. However, at eleven years of age he received instruction in drawing from Francesco Meli, who insisted much on purity of drawing, and put him through a severe course of training. He also studied in the Academies of Berlin and Florence, and while at Florence, Hiram Powers expressed so favourable an opinion of his drawing, his father yielded to his desire and allowed him to study Art with a view to making it his profession. From this time he received an extensive and generous Art training, and was permitted to devote his whole time to painting. He studied from life first in Florence. In 1853 he went again to Frankfort, and became a pupil of E. Steinle, at the Städel Institute, and under him painted his first picture "The death of Brunellesco," which bore marked traces of his master's influence. He then studied at Brussels, the Louvre, and the Life School in Paris, and finally three years in Rome. He did not exhibit till 1848; and his first success was "Cimabue," a picture representing the great Florentine finding Giotto drawing in the fields: that Giotto who was afterwards his disciple and surpassed his master. E. Steinle had marvellous purity of taste, though not ascetic or distinctly religious; he no doubt influenced and directed in a large measure the growth of the young genius under his care. The next three years were spent in Rome, and in 1855, his picture of "The procession of Cimabue's Madonna," gained him his first admission to the Royal Academy. It attracted a great deal of attention, and was much discussed in social and artistic circles; the more so that it was bought by the Queen, and was subsequently re-exhibited at the Manchester Art Treasures and International Exhibition. After this he resided in Paris for four years, where he associated much with several well-known artists, Ary Scheffer, Robert Fleury, Decamps; sending pictures almost every year to the Academy. The elder artists were much against him for a long time, resenting his foreign tendencies, and for several years he was under a cloud, and his pictures skyed at every exhibition. His "Orpheus and Eurydice" was

hooted and scoffed at, and he found no purchasers for his works. There were, however, a few exceptions to this narrow-minded coterie; amongst whom was that just and generous critic, Mr. W. M. Rossetti, who lamented sorrowfully that people would not take a more serious view of life. The merit of his picture "Dante in Exile" led to his being made an Associate of the Royal Academy in 1864. In 1869 he became R.A., and on the death of Sir Francis Grant, 1878, was made President, and in accordance with the usual custom, knighted shortly after; and in 1885 was created a baronet.

Among the list of his honours may be mentioned—"Conferred by the Emperor of Germany on British Artists in Connection with the Jubilee Exhibition of the Berlin Academy—Large gold medal for Science, Sir F. Leighton"; Medal, second class, Paris, 1859. Member of Academies of St. Luke and Florence. Medal of Honour, Antwerp Exhibition, 1885.

Some of his pictures were painted during the years as follows:—"Triumph of Music," 1856; "Romeo and Juliet," 1858; "Capri at Sunrise," 1860; "Paolo and Francesca," "A Dream," "Leider Ohne Worte," 1861; -- "Odalesque," "Michael Angelo nursing his Servant," "Sea Echoes," "Star of Bethlehem," 1862;
—"Girl feeding Peacocks," 1863;—"Dante in Exile," "Golden Hours," "Orpheus and Eurydice," 1864; -- "Helen of Troy," 1864;—"Venus unrobing," "Roman Mother," 1867;—"St. Jerome," 1869;—"Hercules wrestling with Death," 1871;—"After Vespers," 1872;—"Nausicaä," "Winding the Skein, 1878;— "Day Dreams," "Wedded," "Antigone," 1882;—"Memories," "Cymon and Iphigenia," "Sun Gleams," 1884. In 1886 he was engaged on mural paintings in South Kensington Museum, and on a mythological triptych illustrating Music, for the ceiling of the music room of Mr. Marquand's house. His "Bath of Psyche," 1890, was exhibited in the Royal Hibernian Academy about two years ago, and commanded much attention, and admiration of the exquisite delicacy and finish of painting.

Lord Leighton, besides being a painter of renown, and a book illustrator of marvellous merit and lasting fame, was also a sculptor and musician. It is indeed seldom that an artist wins much success in more than one branch of his profession; but in his sculptured work in bronze, Leighton gained distinction. His "Athlete struggling with a Python" was greatly thought of,

and bought for £2,000 for the Chantrey Bequest. He got a first class medal at Paris for sculpture.

Leighton was a highly cultured man; he knew many languages, several of which he spoke like a native; he travelled a great deal, and from the East gathered his store of rich material which he afterwards utilized in his "Jew's House." His "Odalesque" first roused popular opinion in his favour, and showed plainly the Oriental element. Though he studied Greek art much, his tendency was strongly towards pictures of imagination, and though not inaccurate in form, he lacked the severity of pure Greek outline; he seems to aim more at loveliness than Academic strictness. In this he differs from Millais. who pays more attention to general aspects, and paints more boldly, and possibly more strongly. Leighton is a greater master of technique, is more delicate in treatment, more æsthetic, unites more closely beauty of idea with perfection of form, and is careful to clothe his conceptions in dainty and artistic raiment. A subdued quietude, elegance and refinement pervade his work. In the old masters there is sometimes a wonderful purity of colour, a love of the clearness, the radiance that comes from the use of simple colour, and avoidance of any opaque treatment. Ruskin gives great praise to this speaking of the use of pure colour in high terms, and even holds that a love of brightness in colour is a sign of excellence and purity in the individual. In speaking of colourists and chiaroscurists. Mr. Ruskin contrasts them in this way: "In their early days the colourists are separated from the other schools by their contentment with tranquil cheerfulness of light, by their never wanting to be dazzled. None of their lights are flashing or blinding; they are soft, winning, precious; lights of pearl, not of lime; only you know on this condition they cannot have sunshine; their day is the day of Paradise; they need no candle, neither light of sun, in their cities, and everything is seen clear as through crystal, far or near. This holds to the end of the fifteenth century. Then they begin to see that this, beautiful as it may be, is still a makebelieve light; that we do not live in the inside of a pearl; but in an atmosphere through which a burning sun shines thwartedly. and over which a sorrowful night must far prevail. And then the chiaroscurists succeed in persuading them of the fact that there is a mystery in the day as in the night, and show them how

constantly to see truly is to see dimly. And also they teach them the brilliancy of light and the degree in which it is raised from the darkness; and instead of their sweet and pearly peace tempt them to look for the strength of flame and coruscation of lightning, and flash of sunshine on armour and on points of spears. The noble painters take the lesson nobly, alike for gloom or flame. Titian with deliberate strength, Tintoret with stormy passion, read it side by side." Again: "Other men have nobler or more numerous gifts, but as a painter, master of the art of laying on colour so as to be lovely, Correggio is alone. The noble men learn their lesson nobly. The base men also, and necessarily, learn it basely. The great men rise from colour to sunlight. The base ones fall from colour to candle-light . . . technical matters, every one of them, I can scarcely too often repeat, is the outcome and sign of a mental character; and you can only understand the folds of the veil by those of the form it veils." Mr. Burne-Jones has much of this love of clear and vivid colouring, but he is not always successful in his combinations, which are at times crude and hurtful to the artistic eye. Leighton, on the contrary, has this charm, that his pictures are never inharmonious, and therefore never offend, even if they are somewhat disappointing. There is a danger in this; a certain want, of which we cannot but be conscious. The feeling that this dainty light, gracefulness if we may say so, can scarcely face or adequately express the stern realities or necessities of life.

Leighton followed the Greek maxim that passion or tragedy should not be allowed to mar the serenity of beauty. Ruskin thinks, on the contrary, beauty must not sacrifice truth—love of beauty, love of truth. In praising Leighton, however, for his soft moderation in colouring, I call to mind one decided exception—a picture of his, exhibited about ten years ago, "Phryne," which was known in London (among the jokers) as "The Orange Free State," which, taken with the history of the lady, was not a bad name for it. Every shade of red-copper colour possible was used, the flesh of the full-length figure being a regular new-copper colour. As a general rule, Leighton avoided the questionable taste of modern Italian or French art; yet he was not archaic or a mediævalist; his style was foreign a mixture of Italian in conception and German in treatment.

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This style came in with the Italian renaissance. His feeling and intuition was for forms of beauty.

Lord Leighton had a courteous, polished manner, which smoothed all roughness, rounded all angles, and reconciled all differences; this in art, as in character, was in him a distinguishing feature. A man cultured at all points, well versed in literature, and in the history of the fine arts, he had a range of ideas and a refined and discriminating taste. Reynolds says: "Under the name of genius great works are produced, and under the name of taste an exact judgment is given." Some of his classical pictures are the following. "Helen of Troy," "Ariadne," "Helios and Rhodos," "Alcestis," "Dædalus and Icarus," and among his Biblical, we may name "Elijah," exhibited at Paris Exhibition, "Ahab and Jezebel" 1863, "Star of Bethlehem." His travels up the Nile, Levant, and to Damascus, encouraged his love of Eastern imagery, and his pictures of Moorish, or Oriental tendency, are "The Music Lesson," and another called "Music," which met with much admiration. "The University Magazine," of 1879 says: "A picture of very simple subject may be remembered in last year's Academy. Two figures were at either end of the room; a little girl was winding wool into a ball. A woman was sitting down. There was a landscape at the back, such a landscape, with an exquisite colour quality that seemed to give an element of the Eternal to the picture. It might have been a most ordinary domestic sketch; in Leighton's hands magic had entered into it, and it was a picture in a most real and vivid sense."

As a portrait painter he was fairly successful; his portraits of Captain Burton and Sir Edward Ryan are very life-like, and I believe his portrait of himself is an excellent likeness. In decorative art he was eminent, which is shown plainly in his frescoes of the portraits of the old masters, in South Kensington Museum; and his mural painting of the "Wise and Foolish Virgins," over the altar in the church at Lyndhurst, cannot fail to impress anyone who has once seen it. It is full of suggestion and deepest pathos, yet conforming strictly to the laws of artistic representation. To see this beautiful picture to advantage sunset is the proper time, the rays of the setting sun shining in through the end door fall on the figures, and cause them to stand out in a curiously vivid and realistic manner. Many

people drive over especially to enjoy this sunset mystery. The white dresses of the virgins gleam and shimmer so, like, as someone said, a flash of white light caught and kept a prisoner for our pleasure. A remarkable point about Lord Leighton's frescoes is, that they are so much more enduring than most of the modern kind. He used a preparation invented by an amateur, a Mr. Gambier Parry, I think the name is, a mixture of copal, wax, resin and oil of lavender. The walls were saturated with this, and the same used as a vehicle for colour, so when the volatile oils had evaporated, the rest was a solid, smooth surface, and the frescoes are as perfect and pure in colour as when first painted.

With all his minute attention to technique, Leighton was a rapid worker, partly from untiring industry, he never shirked work, partly from the sureness and celerity of a master hand. He was usually successful in his studies of women, especially when he chose for subject a forlorn, desolate figure with suggestions of infinite sadness, and knowledge of and endurance of evil. The lightness of touch, and the necessity for depth, and vet delicacy of insight, necessary for the portraiture of feminine characters, appealed to his sense of artistic fitness. He was a great favourite with students; always kindly and sympathetic, he inspired personal devotion. Indeed, to the end he was a student himself, and his tall figure was well known in the National Gallery, where he would often turn in to look long and earnestly at some favourite picture, and go away so dreamily content that he saw no one or nothing else. If he noticed any tendency to exaggeration on the part of a student in his work, he would direct his attention to the value of reserve of power. saying, "You should never exaggerate; to overdo is as wrong as to underdo." To his models he was ever very good and kind, often helping them in quiet, unobtrusive ways. There is a story of his giving an Italian the means to bring his wife and family over to England. He moved softly and lightly through life, but where he passed he "Left the daisies rosy."

Lord Leighton's studio was one of the most famous in London; he lived and worked in his beautiful house, built for him by Mr. Aichison about thirty years ago in Holland Park Road, Kensington, in a spot surrounded by many eminent painters. His studio is full of many quaint and interesting

things, among others, a gift from Millais, of a picture representing a girl shelling peas, which bears the inscription "To Sir Frederick Leighton, from John Everett Millais, March 7th 1889." The walls are covered with little sketches done by him whilst travelling, all of which he carefully preserved, finding them after of use. He even kept the little book in which he used to draw as a boy of nine, and which may have been among those submitted to the great American sculptor, Hiram Powers, when he decided the question of an art career for the small student, when his father asked, "Shall I make him an artist?" with the memorable words, "You can't help yourself, Nature has done it for you."

There is a most interesting description of the studio, and, indeed, the whole house in "The Strand" of August, 1892. It is, of course, far too long to quote, but I cannot resist giving the bit about the wonderful Arabian court. "Entering from the Though of the street you find yourself in a small hall. most artistic design, this, too, I fancy, is yet another blind for what lies beyond. In this hall stands a bronze statuette of Icarus by Mr. Gilbert, A.R.A., executed for Sir Frederick. A few steps more through a solid-looking black ebony door picked out with gold (all the doors of the house are similar), and we enter the Arabian court. Sir Frederick's Arabian court is simply a creation; one can only stand and listen to the splashing of the fountain falling beneath the golden dome at the far end of the court, and conjure up recollections of the fairest of scenes and grandest of palaces described in the Arabian Nights. We are in Kensington, but as one stands there it would not come as the least surprise if the court were suddenly crowded with the most beautiful of Eastern women, reclining on the softest of silken cushions in the niches in the corners; if the wildest and most fascinating dancers of the Arabian Nights were to come tripping in, and to the sound of the sweetest of strains glide across the smooth plaques; if Aladdin himself were to enter bearing on his back his burden of precious stones. It is the very spot to which you would come to find all this. Sir Frederick pointed out to me the Damascus, Persian and Rhodian ware which is liberally scattered about. The delicate woodwork is from Cairo, the exquisite mosaics are by Walter Crane, the blue tiles are among the first De Morgan ever did, and the capitals of the

columns are carved with various birds by the late Sir Edgar Boehm. The only things which have not been brought from some eastern country are some very quaint candelabra exhibited in Old London at one of the South Kensington Exhibitions.

"Walking down to the far end of this bewildering spot, I stand beneath the great gilt dome, and the sun which is shining causes it to sparkle with a thousand gems. On looking up, the dome seems to lose itself far away, so delicate and ingenious is the construction and colouring of it. It is a place in which to sit down and dream, for there is not a sound except the gentle splashing of the spray from the fountain. The fountain itself is hewn out of one solid block of black marble. It comes to one's memory that this spot has been more than once the scene of many amusing incidents. Sir Frederick's friends, in going through the court, frequently, when gazing at the beautiful ceiling unconsciously walk into the water,"

Added to his other distinctions, Lord Leighton was a man of fashion, a Society man; and at the annual dinners at the Academy he spoke well and fluently. Naturally gracious and courteous, he had much influence with his brother artists, and was sought after by the great and learned. The honour of his being made a peer was felt to be deserved and met with general approbation. The Leightons seem to be a gifted family; his sister, Mrs. Sutherland Orr, is the authoress of "The Life of Robert Browning," a charming and most literary work. Many members of the family were skilled in music, but except an uncle, none of his relations showed talent for pictorial or formative art. At the dinner given by Leighton, at the Arts Club, on the occasion of his being elected President, Millais was present and told the following good story:

"I remember the time when I was quite a young man, William Makepeace Thackeray came to call on me. He asked me to dinner, and when I came read to me a chapter of 'Esmond' which he was writing. Two years afterwards I went to Italy, and on my return he met me in the Garrick Club, and said these words—'Millais, my boy, you must look to your laurels. I have met in Italy a most accomplished young dog; mark my words, one day he will be President of the R.A.' You may imagine at that time I was not very much pleased with Thackeray's observation. I had never heard of Frederick Leighton,

and in my youthful aspirations thought that I myself might one day be President. Since that time I have made the acquaint-ance I had not then, and I fancy I can see before me now that well-known face of Thackeray, and his eyes through his old spectacles seem to twinkle with merry humour, as he says, 'Millais, my boy, I told you so!' I bow before Thackeray's judgment, and acknowledge the truth and justice of events, and the great humourist's power of observation."

Lord Leighton's admirers are scarcely so numerous as Millais'. but are perhaps more critical. Of him as of George Meredith it may be said, "A fit audience, though few." He appealed more to the educated than to the masses. It is said his figures lack life, are not individual enough. Of "Cimatue" Mr. Ruskin says "This is a very important and very beautiful picture. It has both sincerity and grace. The principal figure is nobly principal, and both the master and the young Giotto attract full regard by distinction of form and face. The head of the young girl who wears the garland of blue flowers is also very sweetly conceived. Such are the chief merits of the picture. Its defect is that the equal care given to the whole of it is not, yet, care enough. am aware of no instance of a young painter who was to be really great, who did not in his youth paint with intense effort and delicacy of finish. The handling is much too broad: and the faces are in many instances out of drawing, and very opaque and feeble in colour. Nor have they, in general, the dignity of the countenance of the thirteenth century. The Dante espepecially is ill-conceived, far too haughty, and in nowise noble or thoughtful. It seems to me probable that Mr. Leighton has greatness in him, but there is no absolute proof of it in this picture, and if he does not in succeeding years paint far better he will soon lose his power of painting so well."

In the "Portfolio" the following criticism is made: "The artist's style may be in part designated by negatives: it halts midway between naturalism and romanticism, classicism and mediævalism; in turns it approaches each, and yet is not identified with either. The relation in which it stands to nature is in these days exceptional; it seems in fact to shrink from absolute contact with reality; the forms are not so much individual as generic; the compositions are not so much accordant with events which have happened in the outer world as conso-

nant with ideas preconceived by imagination; the colours scarcely belong to material substances, they come rather as clothing fitting to the thought; in which poetry may be rehearsed and high Art enacted. Time and space intrude into this order of conception, and accordingly the backgrounds to Mr. Leighton's pictures are rather remembrances than a reality. A painter of imagination loves to create his accessories, and it must be acknowledged that lovely, partly because not literal, are the surroundings to 'The Syracusan Bride,' 'David,' 'Cadiz' and 'Dædalus and Icarus.'" This criticism seems pretty exhaustive, and though we may not agree with it altogether, the general tone is fair and commands our respect and acquiescence.

Little more remains to be said; regret for so eminent an artist and so loveable a man must be felt. His death was a sad and painful one; few of his own about him, only indeed I believe his two sisters, and his simple farewell was full of pathos. In death, as in life, his love for his Academy was present; and his parting words, though racked by pain, were—"Give my love to the Academy."

MAI DEAN.

## Mors et Vita.

By CHARLOTTE A. PRICE.

Author of "SIR HARRY GRAY," etc., etc.

#### CHAPTER I.

"And you, oh sad, who still endure
Some wound that only time can cure,
To you in watches of the night,
To you I sing."

WATCHES of the night! Dorothy Morton had lately passed through many of them; sad ones, almost too bitter to be borne-As she opened her eyes to the light of another day, a feeling of despair filled her soul — a keen, sharp throb of pain vibrated through her being. And such had been her awakening for many months now. Young, gifted and beautiful, she gazed at the bright sunshine that flooded her room, seeing nothing but the sorrowful Past where lay dead and buried the fairest hopes of her life.

It was a pretty room, daintily furnished; good pictures and rare old china hung upon the walls, and it contained an abundance of the costly trifles that are peculiar to the latter part of this nineteenth century. Silver decked the dressingtable, flowers in slender vases gave forth beauty and sweetness, and the taste displayed in their arrangement proved that Dorothy possessed an artistic and refined nature.

That she contemplated a journey was shown by two large boxes standing ready packed. A knock at the door aroused her from the fit of despondency and abstraction into which she had fallen.

"Good morning, my darling," said Mrs. Morton, advancing to the bed, and taking one of her daughter's hands, she bent down and fondly kissed her.

Dorothy raised herself, and flung her arms round her mother's neck.

"I wonder how I shall get along without you, mother dear," she said. "Forgive me that I have been so self-engrossed lately, and believe that I am not unmindful of all your loving care."

For answer, Mrs. Morton stroked the girl's sunny hair, and bade her rise quickly, as breakfast waited, and it was necessary to lose no time, the train by which she was to travel being the only one that reached Chesterton at a moderately early hour in the day.

The only child of wealthy parents, Dorothy Morton's life had been all sunshine until the last few months, when a terrible sorrow had fallen upon her. The hand of death had smitten her lover in the prime of vigorous manhood. Gifted with rare abilities, of a sympathetic and kindly disposition, Douglas Scott was looked upon as likely to make a name in the ranks of the medical profession. He had distinguished himself by his clever diagnosis of several difficult cases, and his opinion was eagerly sought by rich and poor alike. On leaving London, he bought a practice in Brockworth, and having private means and being very handsome, he speedily became a great favourite in the society of that fashionable town; but he met Dorothy Morton, and his fate was sealed. They fell in love with each other at first sight, and a handsomer couple could not be found. Her fair, delicate beauty was a marked contrast to the dark hair, and pale, olive complexion of Dr. Scott. His athletic, well-knit frame seemed made to resist and overcome any ordinary ailments to which mortals are liable.

But, alas! it was not from the effects of an illness that could be cured or alleviated by human skill and care that the young physician was to lose his life. He was to swell the noble army of those who do heroic actions without thought of glory or hope of reward.

An epidemic of diphtheria had raged for some weeks in Brockworth, and Douglas Scott spent his time, night and day, in arduous efforts to arrest the progress of the disease. In some instances he was entirely successful, and had the pleasure of seeing many of his patients return to life and health none the worse for the ordeal through which they had passed; but one case alone resisted all his skill, and remained obdurate under every remedy he applied to it.

A beautiful boy of seven years old lay at the point of death—"the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." Dr. Scott knew only too well that the child must die within a few hours, he knew also, that there was but one way by which he could be

saved. He looked at the mother's grief-stricken countenance, he heard her piteous entreaties for help—and he took that way. The young doctor passed through some moments of terrible agony. A fierce conflict rent his soul as he thought of his beloved Dorothy, and of the bright and beautiful world whose treasures lay at his feet—but a human life was at stake; he might, perchance, save it—and his resolve was formed. Casting aside all thought of himself, he breathed a silent prayer to the Maker of the Universe, and, committing himself to His care, knelt down by the unconscious child, and laying his lips to the tube in his throat, drew the poison from the sick boy's system into his own.

The child recovered, but in a week from that very day, the grave had closed over all that was mortal of Douglas Scott, and Dorothy Morton lay like a broken lily, stricken and overwhelmed with grief.

As the weeks sped by, the poor girl recovered her bodily strength, but the springs of life seemed spent. There was nothing in this world to live for, or that appeared to her worth doing. Her parents took her abroad, hoping that fresh scenes would help to dissipate her sadness, but at the end of two months she returned home much in the same state as when they set forth on their travels. The treasures of art and culture that she saw in Italy, though they appealed to her sense of the beautiful, did not interest her preoccupied mind; neither did the loveliness of the scenery through which they passed remove the sadness that enshrouded her soul. "Douglas is dead!" was the ceaseless thought that haunted her waking and sleeping hours, and nothing could fill the void left by his loss.

The pursuits which in happier days were sufficient to occupy her time, now, in this period of dejection, proved uninteresting, and only served to recall to her memory the thought of him with whom they were inseparably associated. Life had become a blank, and a vivid contrast to the dazzling brightness that illumined her path such a short time ago. She felt tempted to cry in her anguish:

"The world is all a fleeting show For man's illusion given. The smiles of joy, the tears of woe, Deceitful shine, deceitful flow— There's nothing true but heaven." About this time a distant cousin whom she had never seen, hearing of Dorothy's trouble, wrote her a kind letter, containing a pressing invitation to her house, saying, she should be delighted if she would remain there as long as she pleased. Dorothy felt no inclination to accept this friendly offer, but Mrs. Morton urged her to do so, and to please her mother, she agreed to visit Chesterton Grange, little dreaming by how small a thing the whole current of her life would be changed.

"It is many years," said Mrs. Morton on their way to the station, "since I saw Mona Dalzell, or Chesterton Grange."

"I think," replied Dorothy, "I remember hearing that Mona's uncle left her the property because his nephew turned out to be extravagant and dissipated."

"Yes, and the good she has done in the neighbourhood is incalculable. You will find yourself in entirely fresh surroundings, my child, and with one who has framed her life upon very different ideas from those held by the majority of people. Mona has not only swerved aside from the beaten tracks of conventionality, but has carried out her views and plans in a wonderfully successful manner, and if her friends do not altogether approve of them, yet certainly no one can fail to admire the high aims that dominate her actions, and the self-denial that she daily practises."

"Perhaps," mused Dorothy, "I too may catch something of the spirit that animates my cousin."

A warm embrace between mother and daughter, a few more hurried words, and they had parted.

Dorothy leaned back in the railway carriage and watched the swiftly receding fields where the toilers were busy with the sweet, new-mown hay; she noted the lights and shadows that stretched their fantastic shapes across the grassy slopes, and admired the luxuriant foliage of the trees and woods. As the train sped on and on, she found herself borne away from the low-lying pasture lands where the cattle quietly browsed, towards the breezy uplands of the Cotswolds. There, large fields of corn showed signs of ripeness, and gave promise of an abundant harvest; the bare stone walls betokened a different style of scenery and agriculture from that to which she was accustomed, and she roused herself to gaze with a feeling of

interest which had long been absent, upon those wide tracks of loneliness, crowned overhead by the vast dome of heaven's unclouded blue.

#### CHAPTER II.

"But God gives patience, Love learns strength, And Faith remembers promise; And Hope itself can smile at length On other hopes gone from us."

-Mrs. Browning.

CHESTERTON GRANGE was looking its best that summer afternoon when Dorothy saw it for the first time.

The old-fashioned garden was a blaze of colour; masses of flowering shrubs, rhododendrons, syringa and tree-peonies grew in lavish profusion round the house; a splendid sycamore stretched its branches across the lawn and offered an inviting shade from the sun's warm rays, while behind it the old church tower was visible, and the rooks were soaring aloft in the balmy air. The Grange stood well back from the road, and was approached by a long, winding drive. It was surrounded by a beech wood, where gravel walks, trimly kept, overshadowed by the arching trees, proved a temptation to loiter away the hours in rest and retirement, rustic seats being placed at every spot where a glimpse of the surrounding country could be obtained, and as the neighbourhood was noted for its beauty, many lovely vistas opened before the admiring eyes of the lover of nature.

Mona Dalzell, the mistress of this fair property, was a tall, striking-looking woman of about thirty-five years of age. She welcomed Dorothy with much kindness, and any doubts that the girl may have had as to the desirability of the step she had taken in coming to Chesterton passed away at the first sight of its owner. There was a look of repose and peace about her cousin and the whole place that soothed Dorothy, and produced a sense of comfort and rest such as she had not experienced for a long time. The quiet, also, that reigned around seemed a relief to her over-strained nerves after the noise and bustle in the crowded streets of Brockworth.

The days and weeks slipped by so quickly that Dorothy took no heed of the flight of time. She had found a haven of rest.

and soon settled down to the routine of life in the country. Chesterton Grange was situated about a mile from the small town of that name, and there Mona spent the greater part of each day, busily occupied in superintending the various works of mercy that she had originated, and which owed the greater part of their success to her unflagging energy and support. Her efforts, however, to induce Dorothy to take an interest in her engrossing pursuits were for some time unavailing; she preferred, during the absence of her cousin, to indulge in morning rambles through the beautiful grounds of the Grange, or to sit under the shady sycamore, ostensibly reading a book, but in reality occupied with her own sad thoughts.

It was a sociable neighbourhood, and the afternoons were generally spent in playing tennis or at garden parties.

As time passed on, a great bond of affection was formed between the cousins. No one could be long in Mona's company without feeling the wonderful fascination she exercised over all who came in contact with her, and being influenced by it. Her energy stimulated the idle, her ready help and sympathy won the confidence of the sorrowful, while she was as a tower of strength to the weak and despairing. Many were the stricken and sad ones of the earth who had reason to bless her name. Dorothy could not fail to see the uselessness of her own life in contrast with that of her cousin. No thought of self ruled Mona's heart; she lived entirely for the good of others, and gave her life for their benefit. The mainspring of her actions was embodied in the following lines:

"Seek not for others to love you,
But seek yourself to love them best,
And you shall find the secret true,
Of love and joy and rest."

"How long have you lived in this lovely spot, Mona?" asked Dorothy, one evening when she had been for some weeks at the Grange.

They were sitting in the beech wood, gazing at the distant hills and the beautiful prospect stretched before them.

"This place has been my home for fifteen years," said Mona.
"When I was left motherless I came to live with my uncle, who had never married, and was quite alone in the world, save for a

nephew, who often visited him. You may have heard of Edgar; he was, poor fellow, always a care and trouble, and at last became so wild and unprincipled that my uncle thought it best to send him to Australia, where, soon after his arrival, he caught a malignant fever and died."

"Yes," replied Dorothy, "I have been told of his ungrateful behaviour, and, also, of the love you and your uncle had for each other"

"Ah, yes! I owe all that I have and am to his affection; he treated me as a daughter, he imbued me with his views and opinions, and the greatest pleasure I now have is to carry out the projects we discussed together, and fulfil the plans he confided to me as nearly as possible in the same way I know he would have done had he but lived long enough to complete them."

"Tell me a little about your old home, dear Mona; we have until recently been as strangers, and it would interest me greatly to hear about your former life."

"It is curious you should ask me this," said Mona, while a strange look of pain passed over her face. "I have thought, sometimes, that if I could bring myself to speak of the past you would see that I, too, have known sorrow, and therefore am the more fitted to be your sympathizing friend."

A silence fell between them for a few minutes, which was broken by Mona, saying:

"To no one have I ever before spoken of the crushing blow that laid my soul in the dust, and robbed my life—at all events for a long while—of all its brightness. My mother, as you know, was for some years a great invalid, and my father died when I was too young to remember him. He was a good man and a brave officer, and doubtless, had he but lived to be my protector and friend, the events which I am about to relate would never have happened.

"We lived, my mother and I, in a pretty village—Eversleigh was the name of it—and led a very quiet, retired life, both on account of our small means, and of my mother's chronic ill-health. I was a dreamy, imaginative child, and these feelings were increased as I grew up by want of occupation and companions of my own age. My dear mother did her best to supply the lack of these necessities, but the wide difference of feeling

and thought between middle-age and youth—the one having drunk of life's cup and found it bitter, while the other looks forward, confident and serene, to a happy future—makes it often impossible for the two to cross the boundary line and sympathise fully. So, though loving my mother dearly, I drew a veil when in her company over my hopes and day-dreams, and wove my fancies unchecked in solitary rambles and lonely hours.

"Of course, like all other girls, I looked for my hero to appear, and when I was just eighteen, I saw for the first time the man who, to my youthful imagination, seemed endowed with all the exterior qualifications and moral attributes that I considered necessary to my choice. I need not tell you his real name, dear Dorothy, but will call him Wilfred Stone. It was at the vicarage that I first met him. Mr. Temple, who was very fond of travelling, made his acquaintance in Rome, and became so captivated by his pleasant manners, handsome face, and well-stored mind, that, on parting, he begged him to visit Eversleigh.

"If the Vicar, a man of the world, was blind to Wilfred Stone's faults, how could I, a young and inexperienced girl, distinguish the true and false in his character? He won my heart at once and for ever. All the sorrow he made me suffer, all the dark days that were my lot in the hereafter, could not destroy the love that I gave to him, and that I was powerless to recall. It is true, the character of that love has changed with passing years, and I have learnt that 'we may be called upon to renounce the love of some person, to offer it up as a sacrifice to God, not that it may be killed, but rather that it may be purified purged from earthly dross and made impersonal and divine. But true love never dies, though faith in, and respect for, the object may be shattered. Love would be shorn of its greatest glory if it changed as we learned the faults and infirmities of our beloved ones. 'Love never faileth;' it outlasts all our hopes and illusions; and when our hearts grow sad, and our strength feeble, we yet love on, and soothe our unsatisfied longings with the thought that when this earth with its disappointments has passed away, Love shall reign eternally in Heaven.

"The memory of those happy days when I first heard Wilfred Stone say he loved me, has never faded from my mind. I seemed only to live in his presence, and when I felt his kisses on my lips. He directed my studies, chose the books that I

read, and I was happy when I obtained a word of praise from his mouth. He came constantly to our house, and my mother was charmed with his conversation, but I saw that she had no idea of the love that was between us. It would be almost impossible for me to describe to you how guarded Wilfred became in his manner to me while in her company, and when other friends were near; or how, though assuring me of his love, in our walks and stolen meetings, he skilfully avoided any compromising expression of it.

"I looked back when light had come, and remembered that not by one scrap of writing, or one term of endearment heard by others, had he given me the power to prove that he had ever been anything more to me than an ordinary acquaintance. Had I been brought up in society I should probably have noticed these things at the time, and suspected the sincerity of his motives; but I had never left my home, and knew nothing of the ways of some men. My ignorance, and the secluded life I led, induced me to trust him entirely. I knew him to be much older and wiser than myself—he was thirty-five—and so the days drifted on, and the end came."

#### CHAPTER III.

"Such as you were I took you for mine."

"And tell me how love cometh?

It comes unsought, unsent!

And tell me how love goeth?

That was not love which went."

"WILFRED STONE came to Eversleigh in the spring, and his visit lasted six weeks. He took a loving farewell of me in our orchard; there we spent the afternoon, under the shade of the apple-trees laden with their lovely pink blossoms; the air was sweet with the delicate perfume, the blue sky was without a cloud, and I felt happy and light-hearted, though my lover was leaving me, for he had promised to return in the autumn.

"I hardly knew how I lived through the next few months without betraying my secret. Wilfred had, without actually saying so, impressed me with the idea that he wished me to keep silence about our love for each other. I saw nothing

wrong in this, as I fully believed that, when he came back to Eversleigh, he would himself tell my mother all about it. Our love, to me, was such a sacred thing, that to make it the subject of public gossip would, I knew, take away some of its greatest charm. So I held my peace, and well for me that I did so.

"One bright morning, early in September, I could no longer restrain my impatience to hear if anything was known at the Vicarage about Wilfred's return. So I determined to put an end to my suspense by going to Mrs. Temple, hoping if there were any news she would tell me.

"The breakfast was still upon the table when I entered the dining-room, and I saw that Mrs. Temple was reading a letter; both she and her husband looked amused and pleased over its contents.

"'Come here, Mona,' cried the Vicar, 'you are just in time to hear the news my wife is dying to tell. Who do you think is going to be married?'

"Alas! my heart stood still at his words, for though I had never received a letter from Wilfred, I knew and recognised his writing on the paper Mrs. Temple held, and some intuitive feeling told me that it was his marriage they were discussing. I commanded myself so well, however, that though I felt my face flush painfully, and an icy coldness seize my limbs, I betrayed no emotion, and fortunately they were both too much occupied to mark my agitation.

"'Mona will, of course, be interested,' said Mrs. Temple, 'as she and Mr. Stone were such great friends;' and then she proceeded to read portions of the letter aloud. But my faculties were so benumbed with grief and surprise that only a few words here and there found their way to my throbbing brain.

"As soon as I could escape I did so on pretence of telling my mother the news, but instead of entering the house, I went to the orchard, for I was afraid to let my mother see my face until I had grown more composed. How long I sat there I never knew. They were accustomed to my long absences from home, for I was fond of roaming about in the woods, and often spent the morning in that manner.

"Oh, Dorothy! how shall I give you any idea of the anguish that rent my soul that day? I must bear my grief alone. What good could come of telling my mother of the shameful wrong

inflicted on me? It would but make her suffer too, and she was powerless to right it, or to comfort me. Indeed, the only relief I could find in my sorrow was that no one knew of my love for Wilfred Stone, or guessed at his love for me. His love for me! Ah, where was it? Where had it ever been? Was it without foundation?—a mockery and delusion? I asked myself these questions and a hundred others, and it seemed as if my poor tortured brain would give way as I moaned aloud in my agony. Would he write to me? No, I said; and then the true meaning of his reticence and secrecy flashed through my mind. I saw how false, utterly false, was my idol, and I guessed that I should never hear from him, or see him more; and I was right, for the silence of life, more pathetic than death, has never been broken between us.

"I rose up at last, spent and exhausted, and went to my mother. I found her lying down with a bad headache; the room was darkened, therefore my white and haggard face escaped her observation.

"It is said that 'misfortunes never come single,' and so it now proved. I was to have sorrow upon sorrow. Towards evening my mother grew feverish and restless. When the doctor came he looked grave, and ordered her to be kept perfectly quiet, therefore if I had wished to speak to her of my trouble I could not have done so. The illness with which she was seized proved to be pneumonia; she had no strength to bear up against it, and I had hardly realised the gravity of her state when she quietly passed away.

"I was now an orphan, homeless and destitute; my mother's income having been chiefly derived from a pension which ceased at her death. It was at this time my kind uncle came forward and offered me a home, and, after the funeral, I returned to the Grange with him. I had borne up pretty well while there was any necessity for action, but soon after my arrival here I entirely broke down. The dreadful shock of losing my beloved mother so suddenly, added to my other grief, preyed upon my mind, and for many months I knew the misery of shattered nerves and sleepless nights, and went about looking like the ghost of my former self. I found no relief in tears, for the power to weep seemed gone, and though I strove to be outwardly composed and resigned, I inwardly resented the pain I suffered, and

mourned incessantly over my wasted love and my cruel disappointment. It was in those sad days that I learned the meaning of pain, and saw that the world was full of it:—

- "Oh, the never-ceasing conflict! oh, the stress on heart and brain!
- 'Lord deliver us from evil!' mournfully we cry again, But the underbreath of passion is 'Deliver us from pain!'"

"My uncle tried to comfort me by every means in his power, little dreaming, of course, that I had any other cause for unhappiness, than the loss of my mother and my old home. By degrees he drew my thoughts from the contemplation of myself, and as the years rolled slowly on, I grew to love him well, and to take an interest in this beautiful place. His devotion to books became contagious, and I passed many hours of each day absorbed in study. About this time I was particularly struck by some lines of Ruskin's, and they made such a deep impression on my mind, that I am sure they helped in a great measure to raise me from my depressed condition and formed the key-note of my after-life. These are the words, dear Dorothy: 'Recollect that Mors means death and decaying, and Vita means life and growing, and try always not to mortify yourselves, but to vivify yourselves.'"

As Mona ceased speaking, she noticed for the first time how deeply the shades of evening had fallen around them. Fearing the effects of the night air upon her cousin's delicate frame, she rose hastily and drew her in the direction of the house, stooping at the same time to kiss her tenderly. She found Dorothy's face was wet with tears.

"Oh, Mona, how you must have suffered, and I never guessed it!" exclaimed the girl, and flinging her arms round Mona's neck she embraced her warmly.

From this night a great bond of union was formed between the cousins, which nothing afterwards destroyed. Dorothy learned, from the story she had listened to so intently, that as Carlyle says: "It is only with renunciation that life, properly speaking, can be said to begin." She also saw how, from the death of Mona's hopes of earthly happiness had sprung her self-denying life, and as she lay awake in the silent night, her thoughts turned as usual to her lost lover who had given his life to save that of the little sick child, and while dwelling upon his act of self-sacrifice a halo appeared over the Christ-like deed which she had never seen around it before. A wave of light stole across her awakened mind, and the good seed was then sown which was to bear fruit in the coming years.

Thus, oftentimes, does God soften the sorrows of humanity and turn them into blessings.

Mors et Vita! side by side they stand; never to be disunited so long as this world shall last.

#### L'ENVOI.

THERE is now to be seen in a breezy, quiet street of Brockworth, a fair, white building, large and commodious, containing wards filled with every comfort for sick boys, girls, and infants. The "Cry of the Children" has at last reached the ears of Dorothy Morton, and her hand has planned and presented this gift as a lasting memorial of her dead lover's sacrifice.

The inmates know well how Douglas Scott saved the little boy's life at the cost of his own; and they turn with eager looks, and loving hearts to welcome Dorothy's approach. Her sweet face and golden hair make a fair picture for their weary eyes to gaze upon. The touch of her gentle hands soothes many a restless hour of pain, while her soft voice breathes words of love and hope as she bends over the little sufferers.

We feel it is well with the children who are restored to life and strength; well, also, with those who, having passed throug Death's shadowy portals, reach the heavenly mansions, and enter the kingdom of their Father.

"Is it well with the child?"
"Yes, well for ever;
No tears to cloud its eyes,
Opened in sweet surprise
Upon the azure skies,
Where pain comes never."

"Is it well with the child?"
"Yes, well for ever;
Life, pain, and grief passed by,
A child, it has silently
Entered eternity;
Forgotten never."

# An Errand by Might.

"CANNOT you make your visit a week or two earlier?" wrote my prospective father-in-law. "We are terribly dull, and Clare would make an excellent study for Mariana in the Moated Grange. Saving the moat, the comparison is apt too in other respects. Surely no man was ever swindled by advertisement into such a dreary, God-forsaken hole as this same desirable shooting box five miles from anywhere, stabling execrable and game nowhere. Clare of course romances over the gables and other gloomy appendages by which that lying advertiser justified the application of "picturesque" to his worm-eaten old ruin, but the place is telling on her, I can see that. You had better come at once, and wire us the train, we will meet you."

By the same post came a plaintive little letter from Clare herself which I could not resist. I started the next morning, beguiling the long journey into the wilds of the north by dwelling with satisfaction on the seclusion of the place which roused Mr. Trevannon's disgust. The scarcity of the game did not affect me in the least, nor the meagre character of the stabling, and as for the isolation which my genial, society-loving old friend found so depressing, it would give me a fortnight of my sweet little betrothed's companionship, free from unwelcome interruptions.

Disappointment met me at Dreighton Station in the shape of Mr. Trevannon alone. "I've left Clare at home," he said in reply to my anxious inquiry. "She's got a slight attack of neuralgia, very slight, nothing to speak of. It's the damp of that infernal place, I told you it was telling on her. I've been to the doctor and we're to call for the physic on our way back. But bless you, my boy, you're the physic to cure her," with a reassuring wring of my hand. "She'll be all right now you've come, never fear. I'm delighted to see you," he added once more, surveying me with unspeakable satisfaction and bustling the porter with my luggage. "What's the news? Anything stirring in town? Where's your gun? Thought there was

nothing to shoot? Well, you're not far wrong, but I tried a new cover yesterday and made a very fair bag, but I can't ask any-body here, it's such a devilish poor place. There now—what do you think of this for a town?" he went on, as we mounted the dog-cart, apostrophising the long, straggling village street with his whip. "This is our one point of juncture with humanity, our market town, where, if you want anything, you must order a week in advance."

"Doesn't the anticipation add to the satisfaction of getting it in the end?" I asked, laughing at his indignation.

"But you don't get it," was the grim reply.

Delaying at intervals to take in sundry parcels, in a short time we had left the sleepy little town behind us and, as the scattered houses receded and marks of civilization became more and more scarce, I turned my eyes on the wide waste of wild open country revealed to us with the keenest admiration. Trevannon briefly summed up the scene as a desert, but the grand sweep of the purple moors, brooding under a twilight sky, which, sombre grey overhead, was broken on the horizon into hurrying masses of threatening storm-clouds, the solemn pines crowning the little eminences which here and there broke the monotony of the view, and the hills which bounded the distance and seen through the darkening atmosphere rose in endless curves of deepest indigo, filled me with delight, the more so that but a few hours before my vision had been limited to the square of sky which admitted the light of day into my London office.

How, a few hours later, I cursed the sensibility which made me rejoice in that wild, wide prospect of Nature! How bitterly I regretted that my eyes, in ranging over that limitless space, had retained no definite recollection of the narrow, meshlike roads which intersected it! that no crag or tree or sign-post had impressed itself on my imagination with sufficient vigour to create a landmark in that dreary waste.

It was nearly dark before, turning sharp off to the right, we gradually left the moor behind us and, descending into the valley, entered a lane bordered with thick copse wood on either side and leading into a wider road, which, after one more turn, brought a gate within sight with bright lights gleaming behind it. In a few minutes we were at the door and Clare, looking

infinitely sweet and bewitching in her white dress with two blue eyes glowing softly radiant above it, was clasped in my arms.

"I thought you were never coming, Rupert," she whispered, nestling to me with a glad sigh of content. "I have been watching, oh, ever such a long time."

"As if we could get here quicker, you impatient child. And you never came to meet me. What do you mean by that?" I said, putting my hands fondly on her shoulders and holding her before me, while I noted with anxiety her unusual paleness and the dark lines beneath her eyes. "Let me look at you. What do you mean by being ill to greet me?"

She met my scrutiny with a merry laugh.

"It's nothing at all," she said. "It was papa's fault. I wanted to come so much, but he wouldn't let me. Papa is such a fidget."

"Nothing of the kind," I said, shaking her with playful severity, and feeling sure from her light manner that nothing serious ailed her. "Your father was perfectly right not to let you drive in the night air I should not have allowed it either. Here is your medicine. One dose to-night, mind."

"After supper then," pleaded Clare, slipping from me with a shake of her pretty shoulders and a wry glance at the bottles.

I followed her into the long oak-beamed room which, whatever its daylight aspect might be, looked inviting enough tonight with the bright fire flickering and darting among the dark shadows and quaint angles, and lending more than their own warm glow to the golden chrysanthemums, and trails of ruddy autumn leaves, with which Clare had strewn the table.

We spent a merry evening. Mr. Trevannon, rejoicing in the prospect of companionship, was in his liveliest mood, and Clare, whom I had not seen since she had gone abroad with her father in the summer, could not weary of the account of my doings in the interval. We talked away over the fire till after midnight, when, reproached by my little fiance's weary eyes, I persuaded her to go to bed. We followed not long after, my host lighting the way up the broad, old-fashioned staircase, and leaving me at my door with the permission to get up as late as I liked.

It was a quaintly-shaped room, with, low raftered ceiling, and wide open chimney down which the wind whistled with a warn-

ing of coming rain. The window, with its faded chintz curtains and overhanging gable, looked out, over the neighbouring coppices, away to the moor which lay a sheet of dense blackness, the dreariness of which the feeble moon rays, struggling at intervals between masses of driving cloud, seemed but to intensify.

Undressing at my leisure, I mounted the huge four-poster and was soon asleep.

How long I had slept I could not guess when I awoke suddenly with a vague sense of having been roused by some articulate sound, mingling with and yet quite distinct from the rain which was falling heavily on the tiled roof, and beating against the lattice. I sat up and listened, but for some minutes I could distinguish nothing above the noise of the descending sheets of water. Then, when my ears becoming accustomed to the continuous sound, I was enabled to distinguish something beyond it, I heard a sharp click over my head followed by a tremulous rustling of the curtain near my pillow.

I sprang from the bed and, striking a match, gazed upward.

I saw that the bell wire running the length of the ceiling was quivering as if from some recent disturbance, at the same moment I heard a footstep in the adjoining room, followed by a low moan of pain.

This room as I knew was occupied by Clare, and the sound roused inexpressible terror in me. Throwing on some clothes I ran along the passage, and roughly waking Mr. Trevannon acquainted him with what I had heard, and besought him to go at once to Clare.

But half awake, and only partially comprehending the nature of my fears, he instantly obeyed my summons and together we made our way to her room.

A night-light was burning on the dressing-table and by its ray we saw Clare, half lying on the hearth-rug, half leaning on the foot of the sofa, with her arms hanging listlessly downwards. Her face, convulsed as if with acute pain, was livid in its whiteness, and her long fair hair, drooping on her shoulders, clung in damp tendrils to her forehead, where the blue veins stood out with terrible clearness on the transparent temples. It was evident she had endeavoured to ring for assistance and sunk exhausted in the effort.

She opened her eyes at our entrance and tried to speak, but

the effort was unavailing, and, with a rigid feeling of despair clutching at my heart, I saw the lids droop back helplessly over the heavy eyes, while her breath, slow and laboured, seemed to come fainter and fainter from between her marble lips.

Powerless to speak, I rushed for my brandy flask, and raising the drooping figure in my arms, tried to force a few drops be tween the teeth. The act roused Mr. Trevannon, who until this moment had knelt helplessly on the floor chafing his daughter's cold hands and calling to her to speak to him.

He bent forward and clutching my arm as in a vice—"The doctor—Rupert—for God's sake—go!" he said hoarsely.

At the sound of the words Clare recovered a momentary consciousness, and, gazing up at me, seemed to echo the entreaty with her eyes.

I needed no second bidding. Stopping but to alarm the servants, I dashed down the stairs, and, wrenching back the bolts of the door, made my way blindly into the night. My late arrival in the evening had not served to familiarize me with the locality, but, with the intense sharpness of faculty which extreme fear sometimes gives us, I heard in the distance the stamp of a horse's hoof, and following the direction of the sound, I fought along through the storm till I reached the stable, into which I gained an entrance with some difficulty.

Once inside, the wind, whistling in the doorway and sweeping in furious gusts through every crevice of the tumble-down building, extinguished each match as I ignited it, before the tremulous flicker had revealed anything to me beyond the bare spot where I stood. At last, in desperation, I set light to a bunch of straw, and by its transitory aid succeeded in finding a lantern with a stick of short, guttered candle in its socket, which with its smoky gleam partially illuminated the obscurity, and enabled me to distinguish behind the door some harness hanging from a wooden peg, and in the stall the chestnut mare gazing round at me with startled eyes.

With frenzied speed I flung the saddle across her back, strapped the girths, and thrust the bit into her mouth. In reality but a few minutes could have elapsed, yet to my strained senses a lifetime seemed to have passed before, backing her through the doorway, I put my foot in the stirrup and mounted.

Rather by the mare's instinct than by any guidance on my

part, for my eyes, brought anew in contact with the impenetrable darkness after the dim light of the stable, were incapable of discerning any object, I reached the gate. which yielded to a jerk from my whip, and passed out into the road. Once between the hedges I urged the mare to a gallop, and soon striking to the left, we were on the highway, from which, as I remembered, opened the narrow lane which we had traversed in the early evening.

A few minutes brought me to the spot, and I stooped low on the mare's neck to escape the blackberry briars and thorny branches of the hazel trees, which broke in all directions from the copsewood, stretching black arms across the path with which the mare in her headlong speed continually came in contact; and every now and then I was lurched violently in the saddle as, swerving to avoid them, she plunged sideways and stumbled in the deep ruts which, filled with rushing water, furrowed on either side the lane up which we made our difficult ascent.

At last, breathless with the speed we had made, and panting from the strain of holding the mare on her feet as, the incline becoming steeper, she slipped painfully with every halting onward step in the mass of soft ooze, a scarcely perceptible lifting of the intense gloom, together with a sense of helplessness before a freer inrush of the storm, told me that we were leaving the sheltered lane, with the heavy, overhanging branches and murky darkness hedged in by woody thickets, behind us, and merging on the open country.

A few more efforts from the mare's heaving flanks and we were on the top of the hill, whence a short stretch of level road brought us to the edge of the moor, which lay a waste of brooding darknesss bounded only by imagination of greater wastes beyond.

The storm was now raging in all its fury. The rain seemed literally to pour from the black heavens in a great sheet of water which, caught by the furious wind as it swept with all its relentless force over the desolate heath, was dashed hither and thither, a mass of driving, surging spray, which flung itself against me as if to tear me from my seat. and beat into my eyes like blows.

At the spot I had reached two roads diverged in different directions, their pale sandy tracks standing out like wavering grey lines, melting in the distance in the general darkness, and the momentary indecision I experienced, before taking the one which lay to my right, was followed by the terrible fear that, if my memory played me false in one turning I might wander about till daylight on that desolate waste and Clare might die without a chance of the help I was struggling to bring her. The thought filled me with foreboding, and whereas all my efforts hitherto had been strained to get forward with the utmost possible speed, now, with my heart beating wildly forward and every nerve and pulse urging me onward, I forced myself to curtail the mare's pace, beset with the miserable terror of losing the beaten track.

And with every advancing step this at first purely nervous apprehension became a more formidable possibility. Even between the hedges, to keep the road in the dense darkness had been hard enough, but here, where no bank or bush marked its limits, where nothing save its mere bareness distinguished the track from the heather which bordered it, the task became one of stupendous difficulty. With the darkness alone I could have coped, but the rain struck with heavier and more blinding force as we rose higher on the moor, and sometimes for minutes together I could distinguish nothing before or beyond but the flashing water which enveloped me; and the howling of the wind as it rushed and roared in unspent fury over the wild free space added to the paralysing confusion of my senses.

At last, after an interval during which I had bent my head before a succession of furious blasts which threatened to tear the reins from my numbed fingers, I felt that the mare's smooth trot had become an irregular, halting pace, constantly broken by heavy stumbles, while every now and then she came to an absolute standstill.

With despair at my heart, I sprang to the ground, only to find my fears realised. Everywhere a dense, pathless mass of heather and gorse surrounded us, whose long spike needles pierced my hands as I stooped to extricate myself from the low, bushy clump into which I had alighted.

Taking the mare by the bridle I wandered with her hither and thither, groping my way with my feet sinking deep at every step in the sodden soil, and the weight of my saturated clothes dragging heavily at my weary frame; but no sign of the grey track met my despairing gaze, and the wild waste of heath seemed but to become wilder and denser in whatever direction I turned.

Once more I mounted the mare, hoping with a last hope, that by turning backwards I might again reach the highway, which it was possible led, though by a longer route, to Dreighton. But alas! in my many turns and counter-turns all idea of direction had hopelessly forsaken me, and all I could do was to urge the mare recklessly onward on the chance of finding some landmark in this region of terrible sameness.

On, on we went, now to the right, now to the left, sometimes skirting a rugged hillock with a group of trees tossing wildly in the wind, sometimes doggedly keeping straight forward, now and again crossing a half-beaten track and following it with throbbing hope until it lost itself again in the waste.

Never to the longest day that I live shall I forget the horror of that night.

The awful, all-embracing darkness, the ceaseless downrush of the rain, the weary stumbles of the worn-out horse, the shrieking of the wind, and above and beyond and through it all Clare's face with white lips quivering in agony and the blue eyes raised to mine in dumb entreaty.

How long the horror of bewildered wandering lasted I cannot tell. I only remember that presently the fierce glow into which my feverish haste had plunged me began to give place to a sense of bitter cold, my sodden clothes seemed to press upon my chest like the heavy touch of icy fingers, and at intervals a violent shivering which I was powerless to control shook my frame from head to foot.

It was while, raising myself in the saddle, I tried by a tremendous effort of will to resist the oncoming of one of these convulsive spasms that I suddenly discerned through the flashes of the sleet the figure of a man looming towards me, and at the same moment, without any warning, the mare's hoofs struck upon the smooth level of a sandy road.

The man's pace was rapid, but it was a staggering, jolting movement, betokening exhaustion. His shoulders were bent to meet the storm, and as he came nearer to me I could hear above the roar of the wind the heaving of his breath.

A few minutes before I should have hailed the appearance of a fellow creature as a Heaven-sent deliverance, but now, with the pale track stretching before my eyes, I regarded it only as a secondary succour and waited not to halt as, urging the mare to the greatest speed she could muster on the heavy ground, I shouted "Is this for Dreighton?" as I came up with him.

Instead of moving aside to give me a free passage, he pulled up immediately in front of me, compelling me to slacken my pace, and, lunging forward at the mare's head, met me with an excited volley of words, of which his panting utterance, coming to me through the howling of the wind, did not permit me to distinguish a syllable.

Without stopping to consider its purpose, but maddened at an action which thus baulked my progress at the very moment when hope was renewed within me, I shouted to him savagely to move, at the same moment forcing the mare forward with utter indifference to any injury he might sustain.

Compelled, in self-preservation, to give way before me, he loosed his hold of the bit, and I caught the gleam of two desperate eyes as he staggered backwards.

But, when I attempted to pass him, an impetuous resolution seemed to take possession of him. He sprang towards me, and seizing the stirrup dragged me, by sheer force of strength, from the saddle, and before my numbed limbs had gathered sufficient power to resist the sudden onslaught, he had flung me from him into the heather, mounted the mare in my place, turned her head, and through the darkness I caught the rapid strike of her hoofs becoming fainter and fainter in the distance.

With what maledictions I cursed my own stupidity! How glaringly obvious appeared the puerile weakness which had allowed itself, with such ease, to be overcome!

In my rage and despair I did not consider the probability that, with all the odds of opportunity and place in my favour, I should have been no match against the supremely exerted force of the man who had worsted me, how much less so when the encounter had found me exhausted with exposure and the terrible strain of that midnight ride.

Well I knew the utter hopelessness of pursuit. The attempt would only again ingulf me in the meshes of that fateful heath and carry me yet farther from the goal in view. The only thing I could do was to keep straight on along the path I had found, praying that it might lead me aright.

With strenuous effort I compelled my stiffened limbs to move swiftly, and by degrees the vigorous exertion renewed the circulation in my veins, and with a joy to which I had never experienced anything akin I found the moor beginning to merge imperceptibly into more fertile country, and the sleeping cottages which I passed here and there told me that Dreighton was at hand. The knowledge lent quicker motion to my feet, and in a few minutes I was in the straggling street, standing with gasping breath upon the steps of the house at which we had called but a few hours before.

A half-clad servant answered my thundering summons and, looking at me with scared eyes as I stood in the porch with the water streaming from me in all directions, said that her master was out. He had come in late in the evening but he had gone out again directly, she did not know where, he had left no message.

The answer fell upon me like a blow, and as I staggered again into the street it seemed to me that some terrible nightmare had overtaken me. At first I was unable to form any collected idea, but after an interval the longing to return to Clare asserted itself to the exclusion of all other plans and every faculty becamebent to fulfil that idea with the least possible delay.

Luckily a solitary policeman whom I encountered, endeavouring to shelter himself in the shadow of a doorway, came to my aid at this juncture. With his assistance I procured a horse and cart from the local butcher, who, after some persuasion, agreed to drive me.

Fully three quarters of an hour elapsed, however, before we were upon the road—that same highway which, as I had rightly conjectured, led in the same direction as the shorter route over the moor.

It was when sitting in motionless inactivity by the side of my sleepy companion that I endured the keenest suffering of that night of torture. No despair which had wrung my heart during the former hours of weary struggle on the bleak heath equalled in intensity the misery of that quick drive along the level road, with the rain becoming lighter every moment and the dark clouds giving way in all directions to patches of white moonlight.

The horse seemed to go with maddening slowness, and it was with the greatest difficulty I restrained the wild inclination to

leap to the ground and finish the journey on foot. When, at last, we reached the farm, my limbs trembled so violently that I could hardly descend.

The first thing to meet my ears as I crossed the yard was the neighing of the chestnut mare which was standing at the stable door.

I passed through the garden, with the dripping shrubs and tangled creepers, and, ascending the steps, waited for admittance.

I gathered a ray of hope from the face of the servant who opened the door, but I dared ask no question. Without a word I went down the hall.

As I reached the staircase a man came with quick strides out of the dining-room and, surveying me with a rapid glance, suddenly advanced towards me with his hand outstretched.

"You must forgive my roughness to you just now," he said, in a deep, melodious voice. "It was my last resource, and it saved her. A little longer, and it would have been too late. She is sleeping now, and with the help of God we shall pull her through."

Beyond that they filled me with a bewildered sense of hope, the words conveyed little meaning to my mind, as I mechanically took the hand held out to me, with a confused expression that its grasp was familiar to me.

He passed with noiseless strides up the stairs, and when he reached the landing, Mr. Trevannon, with a face over which years seemed to have gone since I had last seen it, met him, and whispering, "Still sound, Doctor," hurried to me.

"It's all right, my boy," he said with a throb of unspeakable thanksgiving in his voice.

I tried to pass him, but he laid a restraining hand upon my shoulder.

"Not yet, Rupert. We mustn't wake her. You shall see her presently."

Then he drew me into the dining-room, and in a subdued undertone, of which no sound could reach the room overhead, he told me of my darling's providential escape.

Dr. Rydon, it appeared, had recently through advertisement engaged as assistant an elderly man who was qualified in his profession and produced excellent testimonials. For a few weeks he had every reason to be satisfied with his services, but later on an occasional peculiarity in the man's manner caused

him vague anxiety, although nothing definite occurred to enable him to justify his suspicions.

When Mr. Trevannon called on his way to the station and, describing Clare's ailing condition, asked him to prescribe for her, Dr. Rydon was just preparing to go out for the evening.

He went to the surgery, and writing a prescription for a tonic as well as a composing draught, to be taken at bed-time, since Mr. Trevannon had laid stress upon his daughter's sleeplessness, laid it with others upon his desk to await the return of the assistant, whose duty it was to dispense the medicines.

It was late when the doctor returned home and, happening to enter the surgery in search of a light, he was startled by the sound of heavy breathing.

Hastily lighting a candle, to his amazement he found his assistant stretched in profound slumber in the easy-chair. A moment's glance was sufficient to tell him that the man's sleep was one of helpless intoxication. With fear instantly on the alert, he examined the row of bottles placed in readiness for him to carry on his more distant rounds in the morning.

A dark brown mixture labelled "Poison. The lotion to be applied frequently," immediately attracted his attention, and, putting it to his nostrils, he identified it by its aroma as the draught he had prescribed for Clare.

That the actual lotion had been substituted for the draught was the terrible supposition that immediately presented itself, and the man's helpless panic when he roused him from his drunken slumber, and confronted him with his fear, was sufficient corroboration of it.

In a frenzy of terror, the doctor rushed from the house, carrying with him an antidote to the poison contained in the liniment, and his providential meeting with me, just as he was on the point of sinking from exhaustion, had enabled him to carry his journey to the end, and arrive in time to save Clare.

As Mr. Trevannon finished the doctor himself came into the room, and reported that his patient was awake and asking for me.

Need I linger over that meeting?

In a few days Clare was herself again, and as we wandered together over the purple moors we often traced between the heather the marks of my terrible journey on the night when I so nearly lost her.

BLANCHE WILLS CHANDLER.



### Advertise.

IN a servants' registry office the following statement was made:

"Now, Mrs. N—, I trust implicitly to you. Send me a
thoroughly nice person, one you can recommend. I detest
talking to strangers, am so tired of the perpetual string of
questions. A cook I must have, you know my requirements,
and I promise to take the first person you send me."

This course I flattered myself was business-like. The result was—Ann Sparkes. Now I like good-looking maids; they are generally more satisfied with things in general, more amiable, than their plainer sisters, and Ann Sparkes was plain—a very plain woman, so her appearance was a disappointment. Appearances of course are deceitful; her answers were satisfactory, she brought an excellent character—though how obtained is a mystery no mistress could fathom—and she was a seaman's widow. The last point clinched the bargain; I engaged my unprepossessing cook, and hastened to pay the office fee.

"Oh, Mrs. Smith!" said the registrar (a shrewd, clever woman, in whom I have faith to this day) "you never took Ann Sparkes! I did not send her to you. She happened to be here, heard your place was vacant, started off without a word to me. She'll never suit you, I'm sure. There are several on my books; let me arrange for another for you."

"I have engaged her," I replied, with dignity befitting an error of judgment, a sort of Cæsar's mantle which conceals the fall, "and besides, she is the widow of a sailor."

I own I felt a little piano on my homeward way, a little dubious of Ann's proficiency, even sceptic as to the sailor.

Luncheon, a tentative one, was a decided failure, but happily I alone had suffered, for my husband was out. Perhaps dinner would be better. Jack would be home, and I had ordered his favourite dishes. No one *could* have recognised them, and if Jack was "out" at luncheon he was "put out" at dinner, which was much worse.

"I can't say much for your cook," he said, when dinner was over. "Why on earth could you engage such an ignoramus?"

"My dear Jack, she had the best of characters, and she is a widow."

"I never heard widow was synonym for a cook," snapped my husband, and then, "but cheer up, old lady, I daresay things will go better to-morrow."

But they did not. Meantime I cross-questioned Ann as to her husband's loss, or rather his gain I began to think, when I had seen a specimen or two of my cook's tempers. She apologised for her outbreaks of tears when spoken to by reminding me she was a poor lorn widow, who had always striven, etc.; her poor husband, who had been in the Queen's service, never thought what she would have to do when he died foreign. Oh! she had had an uphill fight ever since the day she saw the last of him at Portsmouth.

"Was your husband an A. B.?" I asked, "and where was he lost? Have you not had his belongings returned to you?"

To all my queries she replied she did not know; her "man was high up," but no, she had had nothing from the Admiralty, not even news of his death. She "picked that up chance-wise."

Till Ann had been with us a few days her case was a puzzle to me; ultimately I appreciated the sense of the worthy blue-jacket, who lay low no doubt to avoid his better-half. My doubt was resolved some time afterwards. It is the only desertion of which both my conscience and common sense ever approved.

Twenty years ago we were not schooled by the fashionable literature of the day to set aside as valueless all moral obligations and sacred oaths as lightly as we changed hats to bonnets or vice versa, now it is all vice or worser.

Beer she never touched, half-a-glass she assured me got into her head; but she was much hurt when I suggested she could curb such vaulting ambition on the part of beer by abstaining altogether.

Alas! for human credulity! Alas! too, for Ann's culinary efforts!!

The rissoles as large as dumplings which were just what "the Curnell" liked, and much wholesomer than them little things the mistress ordered—but no! I spare the reader.

The widow must be sacrificed—but gently.

"Ann," I said mildly, "the place is too hard for you; before

winter comes I should like you to have a comfortable situation, one where the cooking is simpler. You see you do not understand soups, nor fish, nor game; you can neither roast nor boil; your made-dishes and sweets are—not such as we have been accustomed to. As we are expecting company I have engaged a temporary cook, and you can stay on as kitchen-maid or kitchen-help until your month is up."

Ann's face would have made an admirable study for "Rage," if our artists cared to limn the developments of passion in irregular features, and she muttered something about "them resoles" and other oddly-named confections which had so recently struck terror to my soul. I say my, for Jack had been away, or the warning would have been earlier signalled.

His return was followed by the arrival of our guests; the kitchen, that source of all my woes (and sauces) was under proper control, and our cosy little house was quite full. The morning-room had been transformed into a snuggery for Jack's sporting friends, and displayed a litter of papers which were at once literary and littery.

The first morning of our entertaining, my confidential old servant came to me just after breakfast with a serious face.

"Pray, ma'am, have you been writing to the papers for Ann, or advertising?"

"I? Certainly not; how could you imagine such a thing?"

(For rumours of disquiet in the servants' hall had reached me, and much as I wished to rid myself of the widow, I had never thought of doing so at anyone's cost.)

"She has such numbers of letters, and the coachman showed me the paper with your name in it. I brought it to show you."

Yes! there it was sure enough. "As cook in a gentleman's family, a highly respectable widow," &c. The wages preposterously low for a cook, much less than she had asked me—but, ah! far above her value at the lowest—and then my name and address.

The horrid truth flashed upon me, people would think I was interested in her, and anxious to place this terrible-tempered woman, this atrocious concocter of uneatable dishes.

Even while I was thinking, a dog-cart was on its way up the drive, the driver an elderly clergyman, whose poursuivant, a

lively fox-terrier, dashed into the drawing-room and nearly upset his master and a few of my pet nicknacks.

"I trust, Mrs. Smith," said my unknown visitor, whose card, in the confusion of the summary dismissal of the dog, I had forgotten to look at, "I trust you will pardon my intrusion, especially at this early hour, but my daughter said 'Go at once, Papa, secure this treasure of a woman, recommended by a lady too, and the wages so reasonable,' and so, seeing your name——"

"I beg your pardon," I interrupted, "you are under some mistake. I did not advertise. I do not recommend this person; of course, as you are here, I would not prevent your seeing her; she shall come at once."

"Might I venture to ask if she is suitable to a very quiet family? My wife is a confirmed invalid, and my daughter very delicate; so we require a superior, confidential, trustworthy woman, who would understand sick-room cooking and not mind the little extra trouble attendant upon such circumstances."

I looked with compassion on the gentle sad face of my interlocutor.

"Do not think of engaging her," I said. "She would never, I am sure, fulfil the duties you require; but naturally you would be a better judge."

"I should like to see her," he replied, with an apologetic little bow. I rang to summon Ann; as I did so I saw from the window an open fly, apparently full of people, slowly approaching the house.

Two ladies had asked for me, and been admitted into the dining-room. I had not thought of ordering "No admission." Happily my husband and his friends had started for their shooting party; we had but one other visitor besides my sisters, a lady who was a comparative stranger. I met her on the stairs.

"Do come into the drawing-room" (remembering the uncleared breakfast table in the breakfast-room, the dreadful state of my husband's sanctum, the invasion of both drawing and dining-rooms), "I shall be with you in a moment."

"No, dear; you have friends there, I think."

"No; only people enquiring about a cook."

I fancied I read astonishment on her face as she said, "No, no; I have letters to finish, and will go to my room."

As for me, I hurried into the dining-room. Two tall, imposing ladies, utter strangers—

At the hall door stood the fly, with three or four children in it; a sort of reserve force, I thought, who might at any moment be called upon to bear down upon me.

"I must apologise for my intrusion," said the elder and most imposing matron, "but I took the liberty of calling to see the widow, the cook, in whom you are so kindly interested. I felt she must be a most desirable servant, coming from your establishment, and seeing your name in the paper."

"Stop, stop!" I exclaimed (while a comic image of Ann's plain, common and uncouth figure rose to mind, one not likely to do any credit to me or my establishment), "you are misinformed. I am not at all interested in her; the advertisement was inserted by her without my knowledge, and I am extremely annoyed about it."

My visitor was non-plussed.

Somewhat stiffly she resumed. "But in consequence of the advertisement we drove here this morning; we are in great want of such a person as you—as is described—cooks are so scarce."

"Exactly! and you would like to see the advertiser, who is at this moment interviewing a clergyman, who, like yourself, saw the advertisement."

This excited my unknown visitors; the desire of possession is always accentuated by the idea that someone else is keen on the same prize.

"Ah! he may engage her; if not, might I see her, and I conclude you recommend her?"

"I do nothing of the kind," said I, calmly, and left the course clear, how fervently hoping they might take the highly respectable widow off my hands. In the hall I met my temporary *chef*, who was anxious to see me, for the morning was wearing on.

"Pray, ma'am, is anything the matter? I was afraid there was sudden illness in the house, seeing a doctor's carriage (the clergyman's) waiting."

Then I unbosomed my trouble to the good woman.

"Well, indeed, a piece of impudence! Why, ma'am, have the door shut; that is what Mrs. Lord did when one of her servants played her the same trick."

"Ah, yes; but then she lived in the town, and this is rather

a long drive; one does not like to be churlish," and yet I was so angry that I nearly resolved to act on her advice.

Meantime I must be busy, there was so much to arrange; dinner to order, my visitor to be looked after, and some business my husband had left for me to transact for him in the town, before noon. Both enquiring—I might say exploring—parties left in peace, that was one comfort; and Ann, of whom I caught a glimpse, wore a face of aggressive pride which warned me to say nothing more to her at present.

I was in the midst of my household duties, when I beheld with vexation another arrival. I rang the bell for my maid.

"Say that I decline to see anyone this morning, that I am engaged, that I am just going out (which was true), say anything, but I will not and cannot be bothered any more."

She came back, "Oh, pray, ma'am, just this once. The lady has been admitted, I think you know her."

I took the card. The name was familiar, but this particular bearer of it I had never met. I was certain of that directly I saw her.

"So many apologies, but you will I am sure forgive me; I saw your advertisement in the paper; my dear husband once owned some of the property about here and I wished to see it, and reading your name"—(How I hated that formula)—

"One moment. The advertisement was not mine; it was simply a ruse on the part of the cook, and——"

"Ah! just so! but I do so want a person of this description, and I am sure you will not mind giving me just a few details about her."

"In the first place," said I, "she is no cook at all."

"Ah! perhaps you are difficult; now my son and I live quite alone, we do not entertain, we are not at all particular as to made-dishes and all that, I do not consider it well or wise to cultivate the pleasures of the table; the simplest fare, early dinners, that is all I require. My son is waiting outside, and I see you are just going out. I will only trouble you with a few questions. Is she honest?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;I believe so."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Leaving by her own wish?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Decidedly not. At my suggestion."

<sup>&</sup>quot;And she is a widow? Middle-aged?"

"Very middle-aged. As I am told, a widow."

"Well, I am a widow too, and young people are, as a rule, unsatisfactory. Might I see her?"

"Most assuredly. Perhaps I should tell you that she has already had two offers of situations this morning, and she may have closed with one or both. For myself, I must ask you to excuse me; I must hurry away, as I have to keep an appointment at noon."

"On no account let me detain you. I can see that this advertisement has ruffled you a little, and that perhaps in consequence you do not take so favourable a view of her character as you might otherwise do, eh? I am an older house-keeper than you, and can make allowances."

It really was too trying, I thought, as I drove off, leaving Ann to the inquisitorial gifts of the last comer (as we turned out of the grounds I saw other pilgrims hastening to the shrine, but no more would be admitted I knew). It was too bad that through the impudent advertisement I should be exposed to all sorts of innuendoes. As if we cared for the pleasures of the table indeed!!

Of course things ought to be properly done!

How I wished I had recommended Ann; that would have been a glorious revenge indeed, and what a boon for me to be free from her!

The business over, I turned into a shop; the first person I noticed was the lady whom I had left at home. She came forward with *empressement*. "I think I have secured the cook," she said, "everything quite satisfactory; but one word, tell me—Has Ann Sparks a temper? You did not mention it, so I suspect she has."

"Temper? She has, indeed!" I sighed, in grief at such enforced candour on my part.

"I am delighted to hear it," said my new acquaintance, seizing my hand. "I like a bad-tempered woman. A servant must have a fault, she cannot be perfect, I think a bad temper is the most endurable."

I heard afterwards Ann Sparkes only stayed a week in her new place as treasure trove. I never knew what became of her. I do not think I cared.

C. LORINDA.

## Sister Dora.

#### BY EMILIA AYLMER GOWING.

THE first statue of a woman, not a reigning sovereign, publicly set up under our English sky, stands, since October, 1886, in the market-place of Walsall, in the likeness of Sister Dora; no amazon, but a womanly woman, whose career and death were bound within the small, grimy town on the borders of the "black country," perched amidst a wreath of smoke-clouds upon a breezy Staffordshire hill. An obscure manufacturing town, with little stir beyond the rough, sordid interests of hardware, coal and such-like common, necessary commodities. "Sister Dora," nevertheless, was no noteless heroine, no unworthy sacrifice to the great cause of our modern day; the advance in knowledge, worth and power of the working men and women of England. For these all her being was spent with the fervour and resignation of a martyr. Yet she was ambitious, nobly stirred with the great movements of the age; roused with the desire of action, as "the big wars" called Florence Nightingale and other pioneers of mercy to brave the world's reproach in the cause of humanity. In the Crimean days, in the giants' struggle of 1870-1 between France and Germany, in the Eastern troubles of 1877. when Bulgarian slaughter was well to the fore, Dora Pattison's heart beat hard with a deep passion of sympathy for the fallen soldier, and the vast crowd of unknown sufferers trodden down by the wild rush of cruel war.

By birth and breeding she belonged to the cultured, gentle class, which, it has been shown, tends to gradual extinction, unless recruited from beneath. She was the daughter of a Yorkshire rector, and the youngest sister of Mark Pattison. Parental example and precept would have naturally led her towards homelove and the perpetuation of a fine old race; for that calling she was magnificently adapted, and dowered with great beauty, such as gave her power over every man she met in the strange and varied courses of her life. Much violence must have been done to nature in the crushing out of her heart, the sharp cutting-off from the closest, holiest earthly ties, never to be altogether sub-

stituted by the general claim of humanity, to which she was consecrated, like a modern daughter of Jephthah.

In her bloom of youth she listened to the call. She was not content with the free and careless days, lived from her childhood up, exempted by frail health from all methodical tasks. What knowledge she had, came to her by observation, experience and association with her studious family. Her time was happily filled with romp and frolic and wild riding across country, often sharing with her brothers in the keen delights of the fox-hunt, not forbidden in those liberal days to a Yorkshire parson's children. In her calmer moments she went about among the people "doing good," after the genial, desultory manner of the time, as a living sunbeam, to wake up the dull village with her light laugh, that ran though ear and heart like a peal of silver bells. No special talent was developed in such pleasant playing with existence, but a splendid form and physical powers grew out of the weakly child. Lithe and slender, her height towered "more than common tall" above the average women of our mothers' time, although far outgrown by the coming race of our daughters. The strong northern air brought out her rich colouring and lent a merry twinkle to her eyes, rather penetrating than large, with a magnetic sympathy easily moved to mirth or tears. Dark brown rebellious hair set the crown upon her wayward charms, rippling irrepressibly beneath brush or coif, after the style now commonly obtained by pinch of pin or twist of tongs, but never affected by the "unco guid." She was none of that sort, and in those early days was remarked for her love of admiration and zest for refined society, qualities that were held in check, but never extinguished in the latter scenes of her life's drama.

Parental disapproval clipped her wings, too eager for early flight from the nest. There was no such thing in those days as liberty of action for female youth. Dora, a sweet, biddable girl, remained at home during her May-time as her invalid mother's nurse. It was not until her 29th year that parent's death and her father's slow consent, set her free to follow the bent of her will, that could wait but never waver from the self-determined course once set before her.

"I was very wilful; I did very wrong; let no one take me for an example," was her own death-bed judgment upon herself of this time. Reckless, uncontrollable, she grew to hate her home;

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her strong desire was to join a Sisterhood, the "Good Samaritans," near the small sea-side town of Redcar. Her father's strong opposition delayed the step. By way of compromise, she went away to become a village schoolmistress in a country parishon the borders of Buckinghamshire. Here she put away three years, living on her usual pocket-money allowance, supplemented by her small salary. Alone in a little village, she was her own servant, with no help or companionship beyond an occasional charwoman.

Here, after a while, she found good friends, and was visited by several people of worth. Opportunities for sick-nursing were many, and her love for children and tact among them had ample sway. Altogether, it was a good time for her—save one drawback. Already, before her first change of life, her Christian faith had been sapped by reluctant doubts concerning Bible truth and inspiration. This trouble had been impressed upon her intellect—not her heart—by the stronger mind of a man, subduing her with arguments of weight and power; henceforward, most of her days were touched by this common trial of our latter-day saints. It was, as it were, the sting that goaded her on to constant endeavour in the Master's cause, remembering His words: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

Time went on, and she took her own way. Overwork and consequent illness led her back to Redcar for recovery of health of body and balance of mind. There her decision was taken and carried into effect. Under family disapproval she joined the Sisterhood in the autumn of 1864.

It was an unnatural alliance, although it dragged along, like the chain of an ill-assorted marriage, till towards the end of her working days. After twelve years she broke the abhorred link, giving her reason, "because I am a woman, not a piece of furniture." Her disposition was social, requiring an intellectual sphere equal, or superior to herself. The sole company of women she disliked and despised. It would be gross ingratitude to ignore the great benefits conferred on the poor and suffering by the great nursing and teaching Sisterhoods; but for their mental qualities, "neither cleverness nor stupidity" is the happy medium. Dora Pattison, like a swan in a hen-coop.

wore her days uneasily under the small, parochial, semi-monastic regimen of the good, but narrow Sisterhood.

"Sister Dora" now cleaned grates, scoured floors, and made beds, to be pulled to pieces on to the floor by superior hands that disapproved of her method with sheets and blankets. After sitting down to a good cry, she would get up with aching limbs and strained muscles to begin over again at the behest of her mistresses. Her relief was, to nurse the sick, when sent away to a small cottage hospital near Middlesborough, where she worked, sometimes alone, sometimes with other Sisters, but no longer under vows of obedience at a task-mistress's beck and call.

Happier still was her removal to Walsall, where she found her life's work in an independent sphere, pleasantly distant from the superior authorities. These were, the "Sister in charge," and the Chaplain of the Good Samaritans. They gave her a free hand at Walsall Cottage Hospital, only retaining the chain of her vow of obedience to themselves, so long as she remained a member of their community. They reserved the important right of sending her, at their discretion, to attend private cases requiring a skilled nurse. It may be that she could never have found her congenial berth, in those early beginnings of the ladynurse system, otherwise than as a secular, semi-nun: but the means were unfortunate, unsuitable, whereby the noble end was attained. In later days, she declared:

"If I had to begin life over again I would marry, because a woman ought to live with a man, and to be in subjection."

Still young and attractive, she had her choice, and chose the subjection, without the man. Many friends, and even certain of the Sisters, urged her to accept rather the "good match" offered to her. She deliberated, but belied the proverb. She went to Walsall undecided; but the vague inclination towards wifehood was not strong enough to remove her from her life's purpose, and bring her to accept, from motives of reason, a husband for whom she had no bent of affection. Her time of love was not yet.

Her start in hospital work was marked by catching smallpox. Her illness was severe, although happily she recovered without loss of beauty. This was a grave question with her; she would say, "I always catch everything that's going." She never blenched at the risk, but would discuss the situation with the doctors, always giving importance to the hope that the disease might not "make her hideous." She compared herself to Pompey's soldiers, young, handsome, and discomfited by Cæsar's cruel order, "feri faciem."

She too, dreaded the spoiling of her face.

About this time, it was her mischance to encounter the last wave of opposition, in Walsall, to the employment of nursing Sisters. At a time of local disturbance, she was on her way, late in the evening, to a patient, when a boy sprang across the street, crying, "There goes one of those Sisters of Misery!" suiting the word with the blow of a stone, that cut her forehead open. Shortly afterwards the retributive Nemesis of a coal-pit accident sent the culprit, severely injured, to the Cottage Hospital.

"That's my man," said Sister Dora, recognizing him at once, but keeping her own counsel.

He remained for some time, under her skilled and gentle care. At last he remembered. One night, during his slow recovery, she found him silently weeping. She used to tell the story:

"I wouldn't ask him what was the matter, because I knew well enough, and I wanted him to confess."

At length with many sobs, the boy got out: "Sister, I threw that stone at you."

"Oh! Did you think I did not know that? Why, I knew you the very first minute you came in at the door."

"What! you knew me, and have been nursing me like this?"

"You see," Sister Dora would explain, "it was his first practical experience of good returned for evil."

An amusing, characteristic episode marked her recall to headquarters at Redcar in the spring. Having tasted the freedom of a hospital nurse, she no longer could put on with patience the decorum and gravity held becoming in the Sisterhood. Temptation beset her in the form of a donkey, large, handsome and vicious, beyond the wont of his breed. He was brought to the door of the Home with a formidable record as a kicker-off of all would-be riders. With the born horsewoman's impulse, Sister Dora cried, "Oh, let me ride him—he won't kick me off." She made the attempt, encumbered with her conventual robes, and mounted the donkey, bare-backed. Kick and plunge ensued, until the struggle landed her on her knees, which were so badly bruised that, for weeks afterwards, she suffered agonies, when obliged to kneel at chapel prayers. She bore it after the fashion of the Spartan boy with the gnawing fox, rather than confess—and appal the chaplain and Sisters with the hideous tale of her madcap prank.

A disagreeable incident followed. Sister Dora was sent to nurse an insane patient, and used to describe the experience.

"An uncommonly unpleasant time I had of it, what with the mad old lady who was fond of me, with the relations who were jealous of me, and with the footman who made love to me, and, because I had my breakfast in the housekeeper's room, took me for a servant, paying me attentions, after the manner of his kind, and getting me good things to eat, although I always said I wanted nothing but a cup of coffee."

November saw her relieved from this post, and like a bird uncaged, back at Walsall. But a harder trial of obedience was before her. Just as she was settling to her work, and applying herself diligently to achieve her great professional ambition to become fully qualified as a surgical nurse, she was again disturbed in her hospital home by a mandate from the Sisterhood to go and nurse a private case in distant Devonshire. hospital authorities remonstrated, loth to lose again their righthand woman. As they awaited the final decision of the Sisterhood, a letter came to Sister Dora from the old house at Hauxwell; her father was struck down by a dangerous illness, and asking for her-to come at once. Then she knew; he lay on his death-bed, yearning for the child he used to call "his sunshine" to brighten those dark December days—his last on earth. She was sure of her presentiment, having similarly foreboded her mother's passing away, in a dream, long years ago. "Dora, Dora, Dora!" a voice called her one night, and the next; while her mother's hand seemed to draw back the curtain of her bed, and the worn, pallid face besought her with appealing eyes. She was then away visiting her brother Mark, and, not daring to provoke his fraternal mockery at her superstition, she could not refrain from telling him so much as that she felt certain that their mother was in danger and wanted her. Failing to laugh her out of her fears, he sent, at her entreaty, to the post-town for letters. There was one lying for three days, with the news

Dora had foreknown. She went at once, and was in time. Now, at her father's summons, she dreaded coming too late.

Yet she had not the pluck to start off without consulting the Sisterhood. She telegraphed, pleading her father's condition, his earnest desire for her, begging them to send another nurse to Devonshire and leave her free to answer the call at home. Could she doubt they would consent willingly and at once?—being human, and vowed handmaids of the All-Father. Immediately the answer came—"No; you must go at once to Devonshire."

Such an act on the part of the Sisters is hard enough to believe. But they had broken with all earthly ties—perhaps had never known the sweetness of home love. Much more amazing was the daughter's submission to such a strange command; putting her formal, voluntary vow above the rights of nature and the law of God. It was the one great crime in her noble life, the unpardonable sin—in her own eyes—God and the Church might absolve, she could never forgive herself.

She had scarcely reached her post in Devonshire when the news followed her; her father was dead. Then came permission from the Sisterhood to go home for the funeral, if she pleased. She made answer—as when her father was alive, they would not allow her to go to him, now he was dead she no longer cared to go. To this decision she clung with bitter resolution. No family appeal could move her to the last duty—too late to comfort the loved and lost. She carried back her crushed heart to Walsall, striving for relief from pain in hard, harassing work, that had lost the spring of hope, the joy of achievement—"for a broken spirit who can bear?"

So she bore the sorrows of others in her wounded breast, as the rift widened with the years, dividing her from the human tyranny she had set up between her soul and God.

By and by the dreaded small-pox epidemic again visited the town. Case after case broke out, and, for several months the misery and terror of it hung over the stricken alleys and streets like a plague of the "black death." Sister Dora flung herself into the breach. Whenever she could snatch a breath of time—"make half-an-hour," as she expressed it—by going without a regular meal, she would be seen coming down some poor row of houses, and giving herself up to the sufferers in their loathsome

wretchedness. One night she was called to the help of a humble, devoted friend, among her poor. The man was dying of a virulent form of the disease which she called "black pox." All his own people had forsaken him. Only one neighbour stayed by him, doing what she could. Almost in darkness the pitiable scene went on, but one small piece of candle remaining to the two forlorn creatures in that chamber of death. Sister Dora gave the woman money to go and buy more lights, while she stayed by the bed. But the woman took the money and never returned. Sister Dora kept her watch, alone. In the depth of night came the last solemn hour; the candle burnt low and flickered in unison with the parting soul. One supreme burst of expiring life lifted the swollen head from its burning pillow. The man raised himself up, saying—"Sister, kiss me before I die." She took him into her arms, upon her breast, as he was, abhorrent to every sense with foul infection. She kissed him with her pure lips, accepting every risk of sharing his miserable doom.

Out went the candle, and they were left in the midnight darkness. He implored her not to leave him while he lived—no fear that she could do so. She sat on till the early dawn, while his spirit passed out through the thick gloom. Still she kept her awful watch, imagining the form she could not see might yet have some life in it. With the first glimmer of daybreak she assured herself there was nothing more for her to do in that house. She groped her way to the door, and called some neighbours to take charge of the dead.

Brave by the strain of her blood, by constitution, and the divine hope that ever came back to her through her labours in the Master's field, she rose above toil and pain with the bright spirit of her strong, long-abiding youth. The warm pulse of life was revived in the sick and sorrowful with the "merry half hour" she gave, at some time of the afternoon or evening of most days, to her comrades and patients. Always first in organizing entertainments, Christmas pleasures, concerts and so forth, she was the fairy spirit of innocent amusement, no less than the house-surgeon and chaplain. Her voice was heard all through the hospital in prayer and song.

But she lived in herself, in lonely meditation through all. Her surroundings, her daily associations, were bound among her inferiors, social and intellectual. Clergymen went and came, too busy to spare many moments. Of one only, in the town, she made a friend, and for both, time and distance forbade any frequent intercourse. The hospital surgeons had most to do with her habitual round of occupation; but with these, the business relationship and cautious decorum set a bar to any freedom between doctor and lady nurse. At last it was borne in upon her that neither for woman or man is it good to be alone.

Then she met the man who could satisfy every craving of her grand nature for knowledge, sympathy and love. He was the one she had ever known who thoroughly understood her complex being to the uttermost fibre. She consented to give herself—forgetting all the rest, in earth and heaven.

For he was of the cold, helpless no-creed into which it was her dread to fall. She knew it from the first. He had concealed nothing. He had been perfectly honourable and sincere. She alone was to blame when their engagement was broken—at the bidding of a ghostly adviser. Had she refused him at first, she would have been justified; but, knowing all, she plighted her faith, and then—took counsel and broke it.

Her friendly biographer offers no excuse for an act that must have given great scandal to its victim, as an injury wantonly inflicted by a Christian woman's instability.

It was hard upon the man, and for her it was the plucking out of the right eye, the maiming of the right hand. It was the one thrill of passion crushed, the one flash of a kindred soul quenched in darkness, all the deeper that the day of happiness had risen so late.

"My own, my own,
Who camest to me when the world was gone,
Aud I who looked for only God, found thee!"

It was no girlish fancy to be lived down, but the ripe choice of her human wisdom to crown the full glory of her woman-hood. God only knows whether she did well or ill: whether she might have won her husband through the mortal love to the divine.

One day she fainted away upon a hospital bed. She was ill for a month, repeatedly saying she would rather die than live.

She recovered and resumed her duties, caring no more for her own life.

One day a little girl was put into her arms, so badly burnt that all pain had ceased, and death was only a question of a few hours. Sister Dora sat by the bedside, faithful to the last in her angelic task of soothing the exhausted, terrified child, thus called to face the dread darkness and chill of mortality. She spoke of Jesus and His love for little children; of heaven, a happy place where the young sufferer was going to be with Him—where she would never feel pain or hunger any more. The child closed her eyes upon Sister Dora's face, with the flowers upon the ward table behind her, saying at the last:

"When you come to Heaven, Sister, I'll meet you at the gates with a bunch of flowers."

They remembered the saying at her funeral.

How the lonely, life-weary woman must have yearned to follow that little child! Heart and soul, she threw herself into the missions held at Walsall. Snatching the time from her brief moments of rest, she would go out of an evening "to catch waits and strays, and drag them to church." She would enter the sanctuary radiant with joy, along with a following of twenty or thirty people. Not content with this, she prayed the missioners for an earnest attempt to rescue some of the miserable outcasts of her own sex who made the nights horrible in the streets of the town. The mission clergy gave willing consent, upon condition that she herself should be the leading missioner among those lost creatures, towards whom her pity and purity were moved with a love so divine.

Thus, after all the services were over, she led two of the missioners through the sleeping town, into one of the vilest slums in Walsall. A policeman stopped her, saying, "Hadn't we better be near, Sister? It's an ugly place."

"Oh, on no account. They must not think we are afraid."

And Sister Dora turned down the narrow court, saying to the two clergymen, "Now keep close behind me. I am safe enough, but your lives are not worth a moment's purchase if you are seen down here without me to protect you."

She stopped before the door of a house of evil repute, brightly lighted from within. Visible through the window were a company of women, taking their orders from an ill-looking

man. She knocked at the door; no answer. Again, and the man growled, "Who's there?" "Sister Dora," and a volley of oaths came through. She insisted: "Open the door," and the man, still swearing, obeyed. All there had been her patients, through disease or drunken brawl. She appealed to them—not in vain, "I want you all to go down on your knees with me now, this moment, and say a prayer to God."

And so they did; the man, and every woman present. They knelt and listened, at least, while Sister Dora prayed from her heart "for her brother and sisters" gathered there. A special Mission service was established in the midst of the "Rookeries," and at night, the doors stood open with lights burning, for whoever would, of that degraded refuse of humanity, to enter and be welcomed in.

She would take upon herself responsibilities far beyond the rightful office of a nurse, often preventing the loss of limbs by amputation, in defiance of surgical opinion, and carrying her point, and her patient to a successful cure. By degrees she had herself taught and trained into a surgeon of no mean skill, by the help of the kind hospital doctors, who gave way to her in everything. Help in her own sphere she tolerated rather than accepted, and that from her social or intellectual inferiors, preferably to any possible rival as a trained lady nurse. On this point the inevitable failing of our imperfect nature showed her small, next the many-sided nobility that marked her disposition in all other aspects. The want and the weakness were conspicuously manifest during the plague of small-pox in the spring of 1875.

After the last outbreak in 1868 an epidemic hospital was built outside the town. But the obstinate poor refused to enter the ill-omened building, saying they would far rather die at home. On sanitary questions, and the spread of infection, nothing could induce them to waste thought or care. Thus the empty epidemic hospital seemed doomed to stand as the white elephant of the town, while the pestilence broke loose in every quarter.

There was only one way; Sister Dora saw it. She wrote to the Mayor, offering to leave her own post and nurse the smallpox patients. The brave offer was accepted as a Godsend. She stood between the living and the dead, alone—the one person to be found in England whose word could work like a spell with the ignorant masses, and draw every forsaken victim of the disease into her devoted arms.

She did everything required in the lazar-house with the uncertain help of a porter, full of zeal, but too often, of drink; also an occasional hand's turn from an odd woman or two out of the workhouse. These shared with her in the abominable washing. Sometimes she had not a creature beside herself. There was no time for rest, so that it became a difficulty to prevent herself from sleeping heavily at night. Nothing but a real sensational novel would keep her awake while not in actual service about the beds.

One Saturday night, the porter being "at his trick," Sister Dora's novel-reading was interrupted by the sudden fling out of bed of a big, heavy man, delirious, in the worst stage of confluent small-pox. With a loud yell he rushed to the door. She followed and grappled with him, horrible as he was to every sense. Her strength of will and body mastered him, and she held him down in bed till the morning, when the doctor came, whose astonishment knew no bounds. He spoke of her as a prodigy of superhuman strength—she could sit up all night and work all day, and seem neither physically nor mentally the worse for it.

She returned to her old post in the middle of August, when the long months of the epidemic ran to an end. More gladly she would have laid down her life for others, had it been her Master's will. Once again her face of perpetual sunshine beamed on the familiar wards—again her voice stirred all hearts with prayer and song, or merry laughter. Once more the delicate touch of her skilled hand bound up the shattered limbs and salved the terrible burns and scalds that were in the day's work at most times. But not for long.

During the winter of 1876-7 she found at last there was a change in herself. Her accustomed constant duties, the lifting her patients and carrying the dead down the narrow stairs to the mortuary were no longer accomplished with the ease and power of which she was so proud. Reluctantly, she consulted a surgeon whom she could trust as a friend, Mr. Compton, of Birmingham. Gently, but frankly, he pronounced her doom; cancer, inevitable death. After a short struggle she pulled herself together. Her

choice was made. As the Roman gladiator, in immortal marble "Consents to death but conquers agony."

So did Sister Dora. It was hard to bear. She was the very embodiment of vigorous life, still, apparently in the bloom of health and ripened beauty. Her grand form and stately grace belied the dark sentence that marked her for the tomb. Her one thought was to die in harness, concealing from all the world the canker within her life's flower. Her doctor was sworn to secrecy; only her own hands dressed the daily-increasing wound that, she knew too well, must gradually eat away her earthly existence. Pity, commiseration, she never could endure. The atmosphere of gloom, exaggerated report, deadly prognostication, that gathers round a "breaking-up" person, like barnacles about a stranded ship, would have driven her mad. Her cross was comparatively easy to bear, alone.

Yet not alone. She stood already upon the bourne that is neither in this world nor in that which is to come, though touching both with either hand. To her the eternal Unseen became very real, through her active work for her Master, in those last days of waning light, after the decree had gone forth: "Thou shalt die and not live."

She held on to her duties till the middle of summer, 1878, and before finally giving up her work at Walsall, she took a large party of nurses and patients for a day at Lichfield. Brighter, merrier than ever, she was the soul of the day's gladness. When the train unexpectedly stopped by an embankment grown with flowers, she leapt out, and ran like a frolicsome child to snatch handfuls of the wayside blossoms as her lawful prize.

That autumn she went to the Paris Exhibition, mainly to study the surgical inventions there displayed. Next she was "busy with wonderful cases" in London, mastering Professor Lister's new method in the treatment of wounds, for the future benefit of the Walsall Hospital.

A cough growing upon her attracted the notice of the London doctors. One of them asked to examine her chest. This would have discovered all, so, hugging her secret, she fled to Birmingham and Mr. Compton. There it was thought she would have died at the hotel. Mr. Compton offered to take her into his own house, hoping to keep her alive for a few days, but she would not.

"Let me die among my own people," she kept repeating, and she was conveyed to a small house taken for her by the committee near the newly-built hospital at Walsall.

There, to the last, she persisted in concealing from the world the nature of her disease. Her sufferings were intense, but she would only admit one untrained servant girl, whom she could trust, to attend upon her. The news spread through town and country that Sister Dora was dying of consumption. From her nearest kin the secret was studiously kept; the very fact of her being seriously ill was held back as long as it could be. At last her family were made aware of that much, and two of her sisters came to Walsall. She hurried them away at the end of a week, refusing their assistance as nurses. She would not have it said that she had caught cancer as a nurse, but it is hard to resist the suspicion that she may have done so through the excessive strain habitually put upon her strength.

Sometimes her mind would hark back through the years, into the bye-paths of the "might have been." Now she missed the closest love of a husband, the joy of children left out of her life. Again there were times when she could receive visitors; they found her "that cheerful and merry they were sure she would come round"—the old blithe, lofty spirit strong in death.

Towards the end, all human aid failing, she bade the watchers go, saying, "I have lived alone, let me die alone," repeated till they obeyed, only one keeping sight of her through the half-open door, till the great soul parted painlessly in the darkest hour of the winter midnight.

Her people bore her body to the long home, followed by the whole town and the country side. A memorable funeral. Then the wish was born to perpetuate her likeness in marble, to set up a statue in the town that the people could point to their children's children as "our Sister Dora." Presently a singular source of honour opened to her memory. A little book emanated from the Cathedral Close of Lichfield, written by her friend, Eva Lonsdale, a loving and faithful biographer. Within the year this flew over England and penetrated through the world, translated into the various languages of Europe. The profits reached £1,200 and were freely offered for the erection of the statue, cast in bronze, as a gift to the town of Walsall. This the local council ungraciously declined.

But the desire of the people ultimately prevailed. Six years after she passed out of this world, an impetus came from America in the shape of £200 towards the statue. The money required came in, much of it from the working people, and the task was entrusted to Mr. Williamson, of Esher, by whom it was worthily carried out in white marble. We have seen it in the Royal Academy, and now the poor of Walsall look upon it every day. It was unveiled in October, 1886.

This was not enough. During the next January snows, a working man at Wolverhampton heaped up " the marble-like, shining particles" in the little garden of a house in a very poor court, and exactly reproduced the statue of Sister Dora at Walsall. The crowd gathered into the small place, in wonder at the work, correct to the smallest detail—till the snow melted. This was the last, best tribute to her memory.

#### Under a Grey Veil.

BY MAX PIREAU.

PART I.—Continued.

#### CHAPTER VI.

#### WHAT RUTH HEARD.

THE new year was a fortnight old. Ruth and Evelyn were still on might duty, but the former had lately seen but little of Dr. Carnegie. She was working at her books again with feverish energy, but somehow she did not care to ask his advice as freely as she had formerly done; and he, on his part, almost appeared to avoid all opportunity of discussion.

On the particular evening of which I write, Ruth finding her stock of lint insufficient for a dressing she had to apply next morning, decided to go down and ask Evelyn for some. She ran down the dimly-lighted staircase, and crossed the corridor to the Walton ward. The ward door was closed, but that of the tiny kitchen adjoining it stood ajar, and Ruth could hear a murmur of low-toned conversation, Evelyn's soft treble mingling with Dudley Carnegie's deeper tones. She paused irresolute, not liking to go in while the doctor was there, yet unwilling to return without having fulfilled her errand. Carnegie's voice rose higher, as if in anger.

"I tell you, Evelyn, it is utter nonsense. Your senseless jealousy is a misery both to yourself and to me, and it is quite without foundation."

Ruth stood paralysed, incapable of movement.

Evelyn struck in peevishly.

"Oh! of course I am in the wrong, I always am. But how is it that you spend so much time elsewhere, and leave me to mope down here by myself? I think it is very unkind," and Evelyn's voice trembled with a threat of tears.

"Eve, don't be such a little goose." The young man's voice was slightly impatient, but tender withal. "You know I don't like you to mope and——"

"Then why do you torment me so? You used not to be like this, before—before a certain person came to the hospital."

"Evelyn!"

The tenderness was all gone out of Carnegie's voice.

"I told you before that I would not stay to listen to such things, and, by Jove, I won't."

And before Ruth could collect her scattered senses, the door burst open, and Dudley Carnegie flashed out, his face white with passion. He started back with an involuntary exclamation as his eyes fell on the shrinking figure in the passage, an exclamation which was echoed faintly by Evelyn.

With a desperate effort Ruth pulled herself together and came forward, though her face was as white as his own.

"Evelyn," she said in a clear voice, without looking at Carnegie, "I must apologize for having accidentally overheard a conversation no doubt intended to be private. I am very sorry it has happened."

To save her life Ruth could not have added another word. Carnegie's glance seemed burning through her.

For a moment there was a silence in the tiny room, then Dudley Carnegie spoke quietly and sternly.

"Evelyn, are you not going to answer? I think, as Nurse Ruth has heard so much, you would do well to tell her exactly how matters stand between us. I am sure we can rely on her good feeling and discretion."

"I suppose it would be best," rejoined Evelyn, rather sullenly.
"Ruth, you did not know that Dr. Carnegie and I have been engaged for the last eight months?"

Ruth turned, if possible, a shade paler.

Dr. Carnegie engaged-engaged to Evelyn!

For one brief, wild moment her eyes sought his, asking for confirmation—or was it denial?—of those calmly-spoken words. And then something in the look which met hers steadied her. And in her dire need, she took refuge, as so many a proud woman has done before now, in the conventional phrase which at such times rises mechanically to the lips.

"No, I did not know. But now[I do I hope you will allow me to congratulate you."

"Thank you," said Carnegie gravely. "I am sure Evelyn and I know you will feel all that is kind towards us. I wish we had been able to take you into our confidence before, but she will tell you how impossible that has been."

A sudden flash leapt into Ruth's eyes. Did he then think it necessary to apologize to her for not having explained he was engaged?

"As Evelyn is my greatest friend, I should like to have been told of anything which affected her happiness."

Carnegie winced. Then — perhaps he forgot that his affianced wife was standing beside him. For a moment the passions of the man triumphed, and a wild spirit of recklessness took possession of him, an overpowering desire to make this proud, cold woman speak, to find if she had any feeling under her armour of icy reserve.

"It is only Evelyn then, who has your good wishes?"

The next moment he called himself a coward and a fool, as he saw the flush rise to Evelyn's cheek, and an ominous frown deepen on her brow. But the pride which had roused his momentary madness saved the situation.

"Not at all," said Ruth, her voice clear cut as crystal. "I congratulate you both, and hope you may be very happy—together."

The pause before the last word was hardly perceptible. But Carnegie bit his lip till it bled.

"I hope so too, but I am afraid I do not see much prospect of it at present," struck in Evelyn, her voice trembling with anger

Carnegie turned to her with a swift change of expression, in which rage, compunction, and a certain sense of shame were all mingled.

"Evelyn," he said in a low tone, almost with a note of appeal. "Surely our quarrels had better not be made public property."

"I think Ruth has already heard enough to make it of little importance whether she hears more," retorted Evelyn, shrugging her shoulders.

Carnegie turned to Ruth almost desperately. And perhaps she answered the unspoken appeal.

"Evelyn," she said gently, "you must forgive me for having unwittingly forced your confidence. You may be quite sure it is safe with me, and, if you would rather say no more, you may rely on my never mentioning it again."

Tact is a blessed thing. Evelyn's frowning countenance cleared a little, and Carnegie flashed a second glance at Ruth, a glance of heartfelt gratitude. But this time she would not meet his eyes.

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"Evelyn," he said quickly, "I must go now. You will tell Nurse Ruth why you could not confide in her before?"

There was a certain note of warning in the young man's voice, and Evelyn appeared to be slightly impressed, for, as the door closed behind him, she threw her arms round her friend's waist, and lifted her face with the old pleading caressing look which Ruth knew so well.

"Ruth, you are not angry with me for not telling you of this before? I couldn't, because—well, you see, it's not a settled thing, so we don't like it talked about. Poor Dudley hasn't got enough to marry on at present, and I haven't a penny, and I am only nineteen. So he said he couldn't bind me to an engagement, but for all that he considers he is engaged to me, and when he gets on a bit in his profession, we shall announce it. Do say something kind, Ruthie."

Ruth turned her head aside, and scrutinized the toe of her boot as if it were the most enthralling thing on earth.

"No doubt Dr. Carnegie was quite right, Evelyn," she said in strained tones. "And I suppose you are very happy?"

" Happy?"

Evelyn laid her head on her friend's shoulder with a queer little laugh.

"Oh, yes, I suppose so. Of course I am desperately in love with Dudley, only sometimes he aggravates me. Still—oh. yes, of course I am happy. And by-and-bye I shall be happier still. It is horrid being engaged, and not being able to tell anybody. But he said it would not fair to me to do so, and he won't even allow me to consider myself bound to him. As if I could ever care about anyone else!"

Ruth was silent for a moment, and there was some scorn, as well as bitterness, in her expression. Then her face suddenly softened.

"He is right, and I think he is a good man," she said softly.

"Be true to him, Evelyn, as he has been true to you."

"Has he been true to me?" asked Evelyn, with a sudden spurt of bitterness.

A wave of crimson surged over Ruth's face, but her eyes met Evelyn's fearlessly.

"Yes," she said steadily. "I am sure he is not the sort of man to be anything else. Believe me, Evelyn, you will do better to trust him."

A wistful expression crept into Evelyn's face.

"I wish I could. But Ruth-you don't know."

"No," said Ruth quickly, "and I would rather not. It is not right to make me a recipient of doubts against the man you are going to marry."

"No, I daresay not. And after all," with another sudden change of tone, "I know how fond Dudley really is of me, in spite of our occasional quarrels."

The words were spoken half defiantly, as if the girl dared her friend to contradict her.

Ruth did not answer directly. She looked straight before her with an intent gaze which saw more than the white-washed walls of the tiny kitchen. When she looked again at Evelyn it was with an expression which the latter could hardly understand, an expression mingled of pride, resolution, and something very like pity.

"I am glad you feel that, Evelyn, and I hope you will always do so."

Then rising, she kissed Evelyn's cheek, and went swiftly away to her own ward. There in the silence, she sat down to think. This then was the meaning of Evelyn's altered looks and generally strange behaviour, of her absurd jealousy on the occasions that Dudley Carnegie had happened to take any special notice of her friend. Ruth's cheeks burnt hotly as she remembered how frequent those occasions had been. Yet, looking back, she could also remember thankfully that that jealousy had no real foundation, that Dr. Carnegie had never treated her otherwise than as a friend, had never given her reason to suppose that he thought of her in any other light. And she, how had she held him? As a friend, a friend whose opinion she valued, and whose intellect she admired—surely nothing more? Ruth dared gauge no deeper, she turned almost fiercely from this thought to the painful wonder if Evelyn was likely to make a man of Carnegie's stamp happy. It did not occur to her that it was a little strange she did not rather think whether he was likely to make Evelyn happy. Ruth's nature, as I have said, was a self-conscious one, but just now she dared not let that self-consciousness assert itself. There are moments in most of our lives, unless we happen to be exceptionally brave or exceptionally self-confident, when we would prefer not to know ourselves and our own weakness.

And then she fell to speculating miserably on Evelyn's words—"Since a certain person came to the hospital." Of course, that person might be any one of the thirty nurses at Kemperton, yet—And Evelyn had said that—to him! Oh! it was cruel, wicked—and Ruth Winter bowed her head in an agony of humiliation, a choking sob shaking her from head to foot. Long she sat there silent, while the patients slept on peacefully, and in the room above, Dudley Carnegie tossed on his uneasy couch, and dreamed—perhaps of Evelyn.

At last she lifted her head, the light of a new resolve in her eyes. She would accept the responsibility she had unwittingly incurred. At first, in the chaotic tumult of painful feeling, she had had wild thoughts of running away from it all, of leaving the hospital at once; but wiser counsels had prevailed.

It would be simple cowardice to go away now, Dr. Carnegie might even think—Ruth would not allow herself to say what he might think; but she felt very certain that, both for Evelyn's sake and her own, she had no right to desert her post. Evelyn was so weak, so wilful, she needed Ruth's help always, and now that she, Ruth, understood the position she would be better able to give that help. And looking out at the eastern sky, across which the first faint flush of dawn was creeping, Ruth registered a silent vow that she would do her best to help Evelyn to become all that Dudley Carnegie's future wife should be.

#### CHAPTER VII.

#### THE HISTORY OF A NIGHT.

In the long monotonous weeks which followed her discovery of Dr. Carnegie's engagement, it often seemed to Ruth Winter that she had been brought up short against a blank wall, which obscured from her mental vision all that hitherto filled it of large ideals and hopes of service. It is the inevitable tendency of an intense self-concentrated nature to see nothing beyond its immediate joy or sorrow, and had her present phase of morbid self-analysation and self-distrust lasted long, it might have crippled her faculties for ever.

Yet such light as she had she strove to follow, albeit weakly and waveringly. She tried hard to fulfil the vow which she had imposed upon herself, though the task was an unthankful one.

To attempt to make an impression on Evelyn was like reading a butterfly a lecture on its moral responsibilities. Evelyn was as truly fond of Dudley as her shallow nature would allow, she was proud of his intellect, of his skill, even of his popularity amongst his poorer patients, but her pride never seemed to kindle in her any desire to rival him in his devotion to an ideal which she would have considered high-flown, impractical, and quixotic, had she even thought about it at all. Truth to tell, Evelyn had never understood the man she was pledged to marry, and though what she called his "foibles" often created in her the vague impatience which a weak nature feels towards some ideal beyond its comprehension, as a rule she was satisfied to let him take his own way, provided he did not expect her to share in it-And was he also satisfied with this arrangement? Well! Dudley Carnegie was a brave man, and he knew he must accept the limitations which fate-or rather that synonym for it-his own folly-had imposed upon him. He had made the not uncommon mistake of supposing that a pretty face and a fascinating manner were linked with a nature which would be a help-meet for him-and by-and-bye he discovered his mistake-that was all.

Slowly the long dark winter months crept by, slowly the spring dawned on the sleeping earth. There was a faint stir of new life in the air, the trees were tentatively putting forth their redbrown buds, down in the Cathedral close the snowdrops and crocuses were pushing their spikes of white and gold through the dark brown mould.

One night, about two months after the events related in the last chapter, Ruth was sitting quietly by the ward fire, when she was aroused by a soft call for "Nurse." Approaching the bed from which it issued she found the occupant, a respectable elderly man, sitting up and listening intently.

"Nurse, there is a strange sound outside. Listen!"

For a moment she could hear nothing but the howling of the wind, which was certainly unusually high to-night—Stop! What was that other faint crackling noise—surely not the wind?—There—it came again, and louder than before! Ruth caught her breath and her eyes met Clarke's in momentary awful dread. But in a moment the professional training asserted itself.

"Yes, there is certainly a rather peculiar noise," she said quietly.
"I will go and find out what it is."

She went out into the corridor to listen. That terrible crackling sound was far more distinct here, and it seemed to come from the floor above. The wind? Does wind produce a snapping sound like a succession of pistol shots, and then a dull subdued roar? And see, down the broad stone staircase floated an unmistakable symptom of the deadliest enemy which can attack a hospital, with its freight of helpless sufferers—a thin puff of dun-coloured smoke.

Fire!—With an awful terror clutching at her heart, Ruth flew down the corridor to the house surgeon's sitting-room. He rose hastily to his feet, for one look at the girl's face was enough to show something was amiss.

"The hospital is on fire," gasped Ruth. "The first floor, I think---"

Almost before she had finished speaking Carnegie was outside, and dashing up the staircase, down which the smoke was beginning to pour in terrible volume.

"Go and ring up the porter, and tell the night nurses to get ready to move their patients if necessary. Mind you don't let the patients hear anything."

Even in the excitement of the moment Ruth could not fail to be struck by his wonderful coolness and promptitude.

Inspired by his example she flew down to the porter's bell, succeeded with some difficulty in making him understand what she wanted, and then rushed on to warn Evelyn. Perhaps it was not wonderful that the latter's courage utterly failed her. Somehow Ruth got her upstairs through the smoke to the first floor.

The alarm had spread, and nearly all the nursing staff were gathered together there, working quietly and steadily at the fire-buckets, under the direction of the house surgeon, whose slight figure seemed to be in fifty places at once. But to the most casual observer it would have been evident that the entire lack of experience in the workers was manifesting itself unpleasantly.

"It's no good, Kent," said Dr. Carnegie, stopping at last in despair, and speaking to the porter in a hurried undertone. "They can't work fast enough, and the fire is gaining on us rapidly."

"True enough, sir," said the older man, shaking his head

mournfully. "The 'orspital 'ill 'ave to go. I always said we oughter give the nurses fire-drill once a week."

"No time to think of that now, Kent. We must move the patients over to the nurses' block. That will stand, even if the Hospital is entirely gutted."

With marvellous rapidity Dudley Carnegie organised his forces, and ready hands and cool heads were not wanting to carry out orders. In twenty minutes the work was well-nigh done. But in that time the fire had made terrible progress, though a crowd of townspeople had by now come to the help of the hospital staff.

When it was clear that no further entry into the burning building was possible, the doctor began to call over the list of inmates. One by one, patients, nurses and officials answered to their names, till he came to a tiny boy, hardly more than a baby, suffering from concussion of the brain, who had been isolated in a small ward leading out of the top corridor.

"The children are all together in Sister Benson's room," said Ruth, who was standing by the doctor's side. "But I cannot remember putting Bertie there."

She rushed away to where the children were huddled together, some whimpering with terror, but the greater number looking on the midnight removal as an entertainment got up for their exclusive benefit. Evelyn was in charge of the party.

"Is Bertie here-Bertie Lawes?" asked Ruth, breathlessly.

"I don't think so—no, he is not. Isn't he in the next room?"
Ruth was there almost before she had finished speaking.

Alas—it was empty! Evelyn followed more leisurely, but even she looked slightly perturbed when she saw Ruth's anxious face.

"He may be in some other part of the building," she suggested consolingly.

"But he isn't," returned Ruth distractedly. "If anything should happen to that child I should never forgive myself, for I persuaded his mother to send him here, and she made me promise to look after him. Oh! Evelyn, what shall we do? Suppose he is there!"

She wrung her hands in agony as she pointed to the tall mass of hospital buildings, which could clearly be seen across the intervening garden space, every window outlined against the dark brickwork by a red awful glare. "Look!" cried Evelyn, almost with a scream. "The flames are bursting through the upper windows. Oh! Ruth, if the child is there!"

Ruth stood gazing for a moment with white cheeks and horror-struck eyes, then she turned swiftly to the door.

"You shall not go," cried Evelyn, guessing instinctively the thought in her friend's mind. "It would be useless, and—oh, Ruth, what is his life worth to yours?"

"Let me go. I must!" and putting Evelyn's clinging arms from her, Ruth ran out to the lawn, where the townspeople were still working gallantly, though with failing hopes. She ran unnoticed round the outskirts of the crowd. The plan which had darted suddenly into her mind was to gain the upper floor by means of the balconies at the end of each ward. She remembered, when out in the garden the day before, having seen a ladder which had been left by some workmen employed about the place. If she could find that it would enable her to gain the first balcony, and from there she could surely climb to the top?—Was this the place? Yes, and here at her feet was the ladder.

Just as she got it into position, a loud cheer, accompanied by the frantic galloping of horses' feet, rang out from the farther side of the great building, and she knew that the fire-engine had arrived at last. And, pausing a moment before she began that perilous ascent, Ruth sent up to Heaven a swift prayer that it might not be too late, and that her desperate attempt might not be in vain. Then, with that outward calm which intense excitement often gives she began her climb.

Passing up the ladder, and from thence to the first balcony, was easy enough. But a more perilous stage must follow. If she would reach the upper floor she must climb up, hand over hand, by the slender iron rod which passed from one balcony to the other. Only a few feet! Ay! but those few—could she do it?—She must.

Up—up—slowly, painfully, every now and then slipping back again, but still very slowly advancing, till she put out her hand and grasped the rail of the second balcony.

The ward from which this opened was close to the room where the fire had originated. Forked tongues of flame were darting through the windows, and out upon the balcony, as if to

drag her back even now. Still she toiled upwards. Another moment and she had swung herself on to the top balcony, and opened the window leading to the ward. The dense volume of smoke which rushed out almost suffocated her, but there were no flames. And Ruth knew she must make her way through that dun cloud. The smoke stung her eyes intolerably, the floor was hot and burning to her touch, the closeness of the air seemed like some demon gripping at her throat, but still she pressed on. The door at last. She reeled with a sob of relief into the comparatively clear atmosphere of the stone-flagged top corridor, and flew down to the little ward, where she believed Bertie was.

Yes! there lay the tiny, unconscious form, as if waiting for the deliverance which had been so tardy.

Hastily soaking a couple of towels in a jug of water which stood near, she arranged one over the child's face, and wrapping the second round her own throat, raised him in her arms, and turned to retrace her steps. Just as she entered the corridor, an awful crash below made her heart almost stand still with a new Then in a flash she comprehended what had hap-The floor of the ward below had fallen in. pened. God!—the ward above—could she cross it now? Hurrying on, she flung open the door, and shrank back appalled at the sight which met her eyes. The smoke which had filled it before was broken by quick-darting tongues of flame, which were creeping higher and higher every moment in their Walpurgis revels. It would be rushing to certain death to attempt to cross that room now, even were she alone and unhampered.

Ruth shut the door and staggered back to the room whence she had come. An awful death seemed staring her in the face, and she could do nothing—nothing but sit there and await her fate with what patience she might. And the little one whom she had tried so hard to save, the little one who was his mother's only darling, must he be sacrificed after all? Well, she had done her best—and she had failed! Poor Ruth, life was very sweet to her still, in spite of the tangled problems which it had lately presented; and she had meant to do so much with it. Were all her vague happy dreams of a life spent in the service of humanity to end like this? Oh! it could not be! Ruth clutched her throat with a choking cry. If she could but get away from this cruel dazing smoke for a moment, she might gather her scattered

faculties, and see if there were no way out of this awful deathtrap into which she had stumbled. Then with a sudden flash of inspiration she remembered the chapel.

Taking the boy in her arms once more, she fled down the corridor. Thank God, the chapel was clear, a very sanctuary of refuge for the trembling girl. Here, at least for a time, they were safe; if this fell, it would be the last portion of the building to do so; and before that, surely the people below would come to their help.

Was there any one in particular whom Ruth felt would never leave her to die?—Perhaps. When we stand very nigh to death, the little shams, the flimsy deceits and conventionalities, with which in ordinary life we try to deceive ourselves and others, are apt to fall away, and leave us face to face with the bare truth—and God. And, in that supreme hour of her life, Ruth Winter knew, not only that she loved Dudley Carnegie with all her heart and soul, but that he also would have loved her, and held her dearer than all other, had it not been for the shadow of a former folly, to which honour bade him be true. Yes, perhaps it was even best that she should die so, rather than live to tempt Dudley with a constant reminder of what might have been, rather than wear out her own soul in a constant vain craving for the unattainable.

The crimson-draped altar, with its gleaming flowers and candlesticks, and, high above, the pitying figure of the Crucified, was growing very dim before Ruth's eyes; the world, with its perplexities and temptations, seemed slipping away from her; when, across the failing senses, came a cry which pierced the dimness, and called the wavering spirit back to earth.

"Ruth-Ruth."

Ruth raised her head feebly. Was help indeed coming? Again came the cry, and nearer and more anxious.

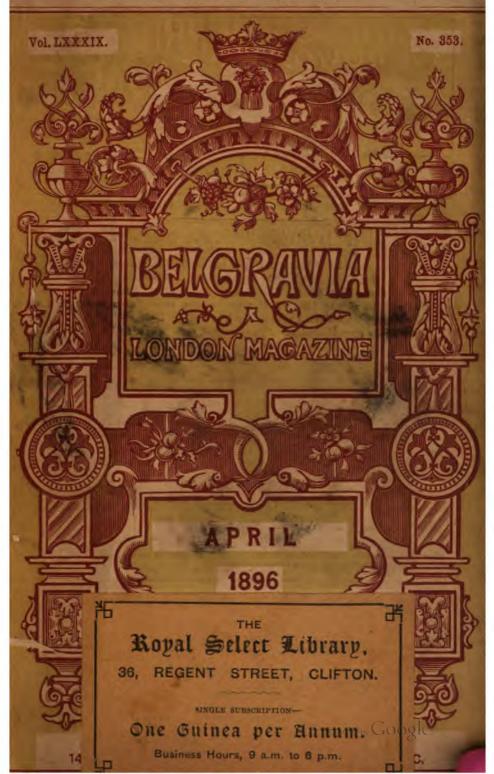
"Ruth, where are you? Ruth—Ruth—answer me!"

She staggered to her feet, she sent forth a faint answering cry, and then, as the chapel-door burst open, she reeled forward and fell into Dudley Carnegie's outstretched arms.

"Ruth, my darling! Oh! my own love, are you safe?"

She heard the words as afar off through a mist, and knowing she was safe indeed, lost consciousness.

(To be continued.)



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Supersedes Raw Suct, Lard, and Cooking Butter, for Puddings, Cakes, Mince Meat, Pie Crust, Frying and Cooking. It is made from best English Beef Suct only! Saves trouble of Chopping! Always ready for use! One pound goes as 'ar as two pounds of Raw Suct! It is always sweet! In short, it is indispensable in every household. Dr. 6. Bowman says: "It is portugally digestible and wholesome." The well-known Analyst, P. A. Estcourt, Eq., declares "It is absolutely pure." All Grocers and Prvivision Dealers sell it, or can get it for you, but if you send 34. in Stamps to the Sole Makers. HUGGN & Co., Ltd., Pondicton, MANCHESTER, they will send you a one pound sample package, and the name of the

of the Hot SPECIALLY ADAPTED CLIMATES.

